竹光侍

His sword must be bamboo

たけみつざむらい

五

松本大洋
【作】永福一成

BIG SPIRITS COMICS SPECIAL

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TAKEMITSU ZAMURAI

ART BY
MATSUMOTO TAIYOU
STORY BY
EIFUKU ISSEI

BIG SPIRITS COMICS SPECIAL

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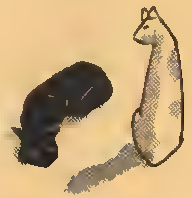

竹光侍

(たけみつざむらい)

His sword must be bamboo!

BAMBOO SAMURAI

十五

STORY BY
MATSUMOTO TAIYOU
STORY BY
EIFUKU ISSEI

BIG SPIRITS COMICS SPECIAL

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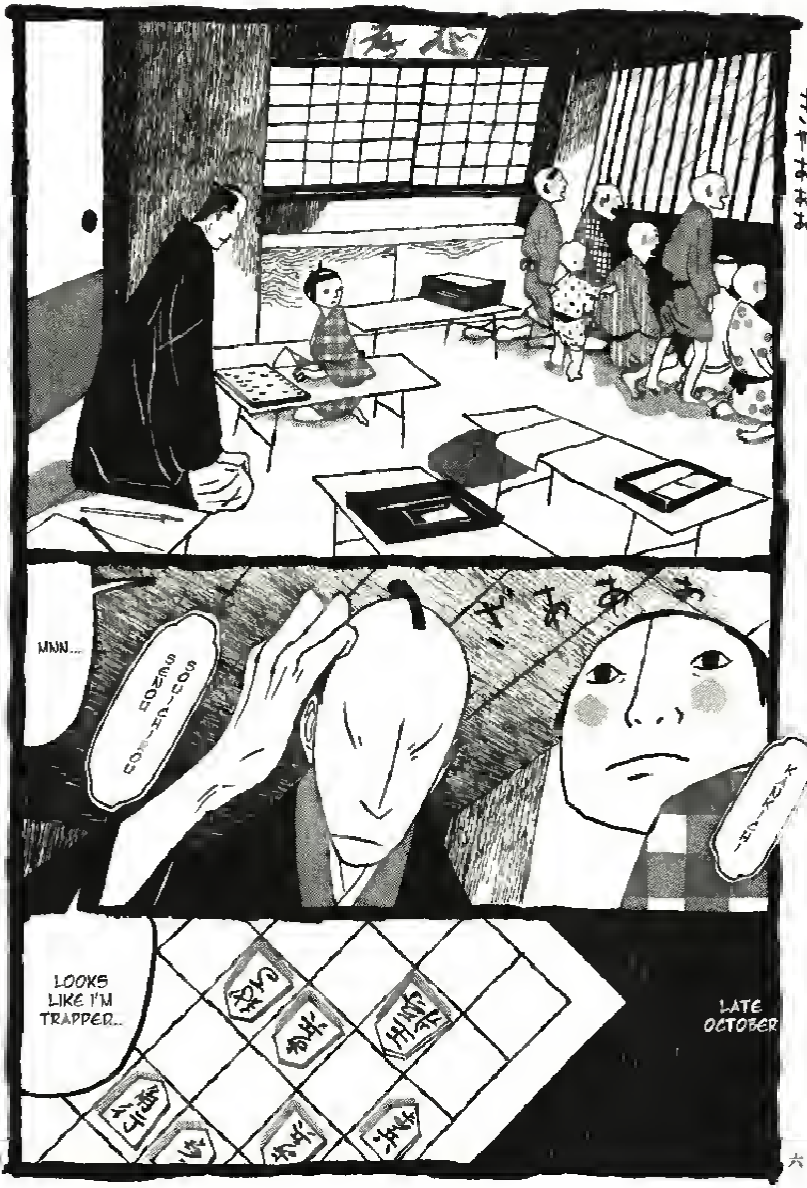
CHAPTER 41 THUNDER GOD

EDO
ぴかっ
キャあああ
ずずぅぅん


LATE OCTOBER
LOOKS LIKE I'M TRAPPER...
MMM...

ごおおお
WHAT A TERRIBLE STORM.
YOU DON'T THINK THE RIVER WILL OVERFLOW DO YOU?
NOW, NOW, YOUNG MAN
HMPH,
MAYBE NOW THIS FILTHY TOWN WON'T SMELL SO MUCH.

ばあああああ
WAIT
I HOPE HE WON'T BE TOO LONG. THE STORM'S STRONG
WHAT SIR?!
OUR SWORDS WILL GET WET!
AGH, NEVER MIND!
I STILL CAN'T HEAR YOU, SIR!
COMMANDER - SIR

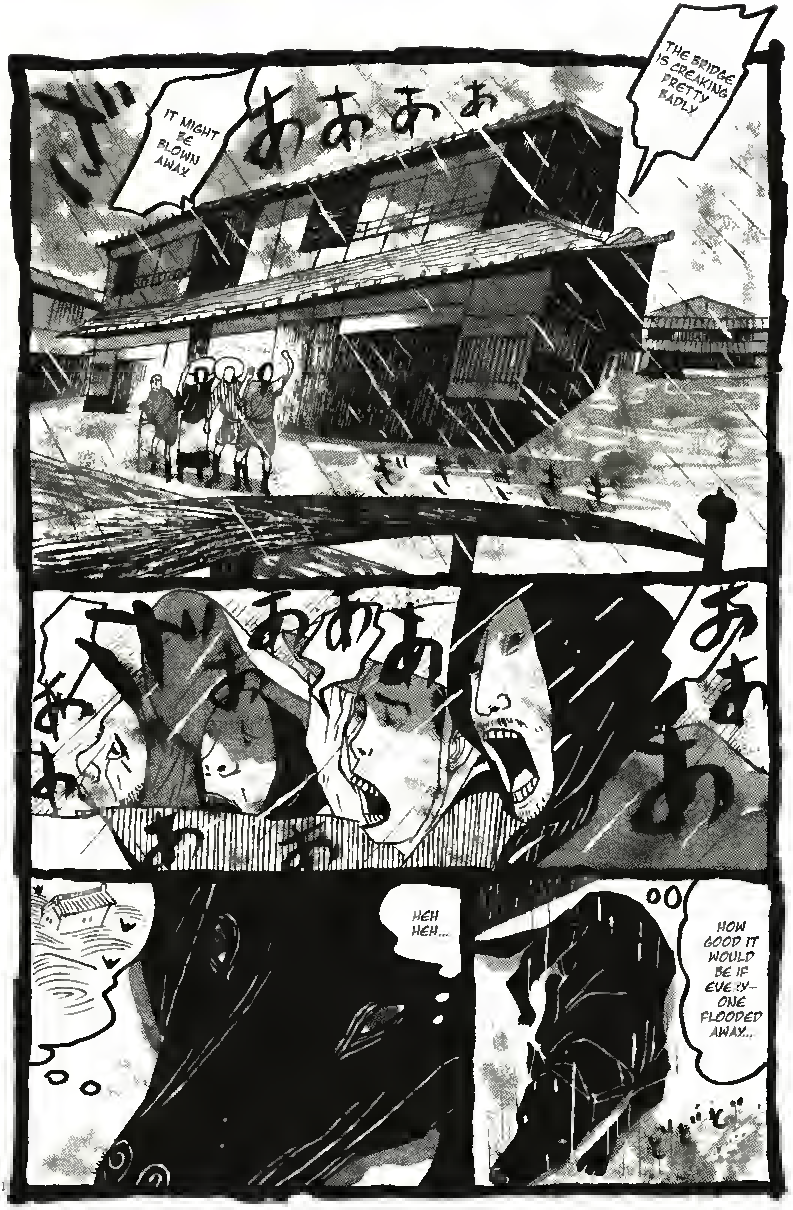
UU...
KODENMACHOU JAIL
URRGHH....
...
ﾃﾞﾝ
ｶﾞ
!

HEY YOU, KIKUCHI! QUIET!
BANG
BANG
IT'S USE-LESS.
THAT GUY ALWAYS GETS WORKED UP WHEN IT RAINS FOR SOME REASON
HE'LL BE LIKE THAT UNTIL THE RAIN STOPS
URGHHH...
あぁ
あぁ
URGH
UU...
GRUNT

がっ
おお
SHINMOSUKE
KIKOSSUKE

ずずーん
IT SEEMS JUST LIKE SUMMER.
IT MUST BE TIME FOR THE THUNDER GOD TO GO.
DID YOU KNOW KAN?
EVEN THUNDER GODS HAVE ASSIGNED TIMES AS WELL.
GENERALLY, THEY'RE ONLY ALLOWED TO STAY DURING EARLY SPRING UNTIL END OF SUMMER.
BUT SOME OF THE THUNDER GODS ARE RATHER STUBBORN.
.....

THEY ANGRILY BEAT ON THEIR DRUMS TO MAKE THUNDER, CREATING TROUBLE FOR THE PEOPLE
SO WHEN THEIR TIME IS UP SOME OF THESE STUBBORN ONES REFUSE TO LEAVE SO QUIETLY.
HMM?
HAVE YOU MADE YOUR MOVE YET?
NO, NO. IT'S ONLY JUST BEGINNING
I THINK THE GAME'S ALMOST ABOUT DONE


THE BRIDGE IS BREAKING PRETTY BADLY
IT MIGHT BE BLOWN AWAY
ざ
あぁぁぁ
あぁぁぁ
あぁぁぁ
あぁぁぁ
あぁぁぁ
HEH HEH...
HOW GOOD IT WOULD BE IF EVERY-ONE FLOODED AWAY...

ザあぁ
……
あ
?
HMM...
STAND
DASH
SLIDE
ズおおおお

ごぉぉ
あぁぁぁぁ
HA.
HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO MAKE IT THUNDER AND RAIN UNTIL YOU'RE SATISFIED!?

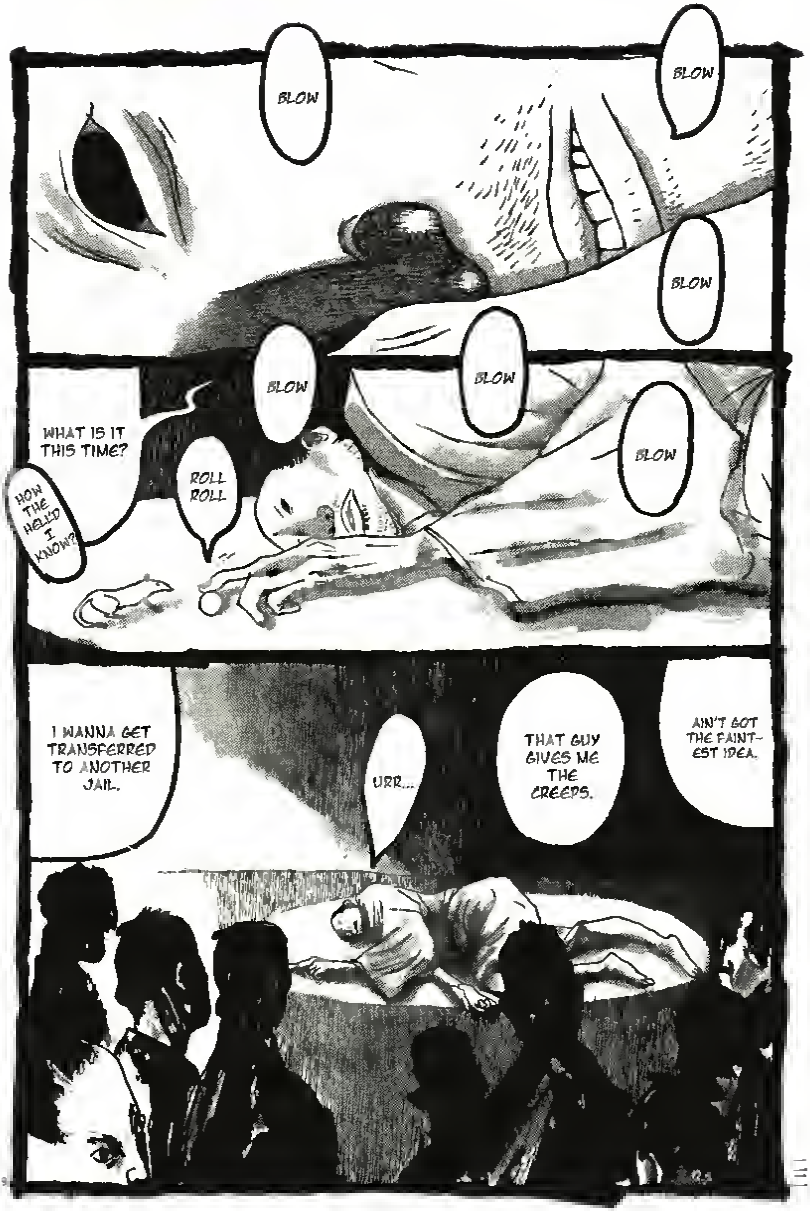
YOU'RE SCARING THE CHILD-REN!!!

きゃー
ごろごろ
ピシャーン
OHHH LOOK!!!
TEACHER IT'S DANGEROUS OUTSIDE
YOU MIGHT GET STRUCK BY LIGHTNING...

LOOK, KIDS!
THE THUNDER CLOUDS ARE GOING AWAY!
わあああ
ゴゴゴゴ

ハハハ
ハハハ

HMM?
IT STOPPED?
DRIP
DRIP DRIP

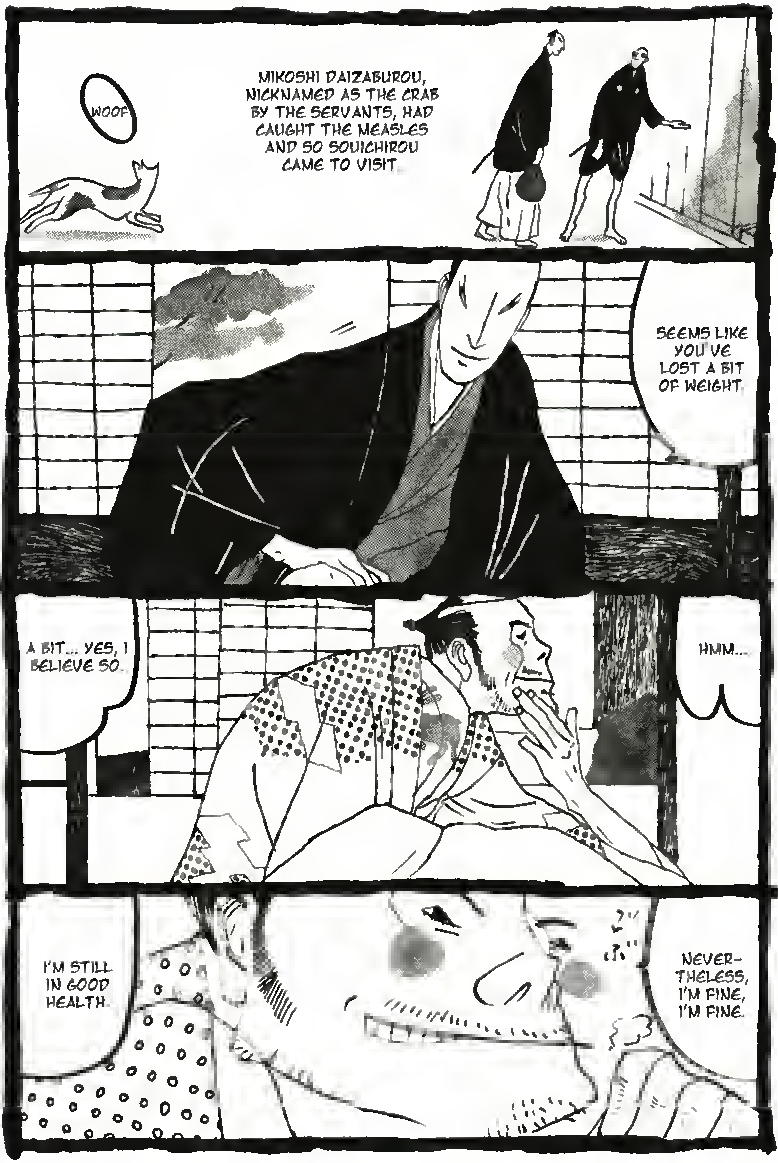

BLOW
BLOW
BLOW
BLOW
BLOW
BLOW
WHAT IS IT THIS TIME?
HOW THE HELL'D I KNOW?
ROLL ROLL
I WANNA GET TRANSFERRED TO ANOTHER JAIL.
URR...
THAT GUY GIVES ME THE CREEPS.
AIN'T GOT THE FAINTEST IDEA.

HA HA HA HA HA
HMPH.
LIKE A BAD JOKE WITH NO PUNCH-LINE
MEOW

*GOD OF THUNDER IS SAID TO TAKE CHILDREN'S BELLYBUTTONS AWAY IF THEY'RE NOT CAREFUL

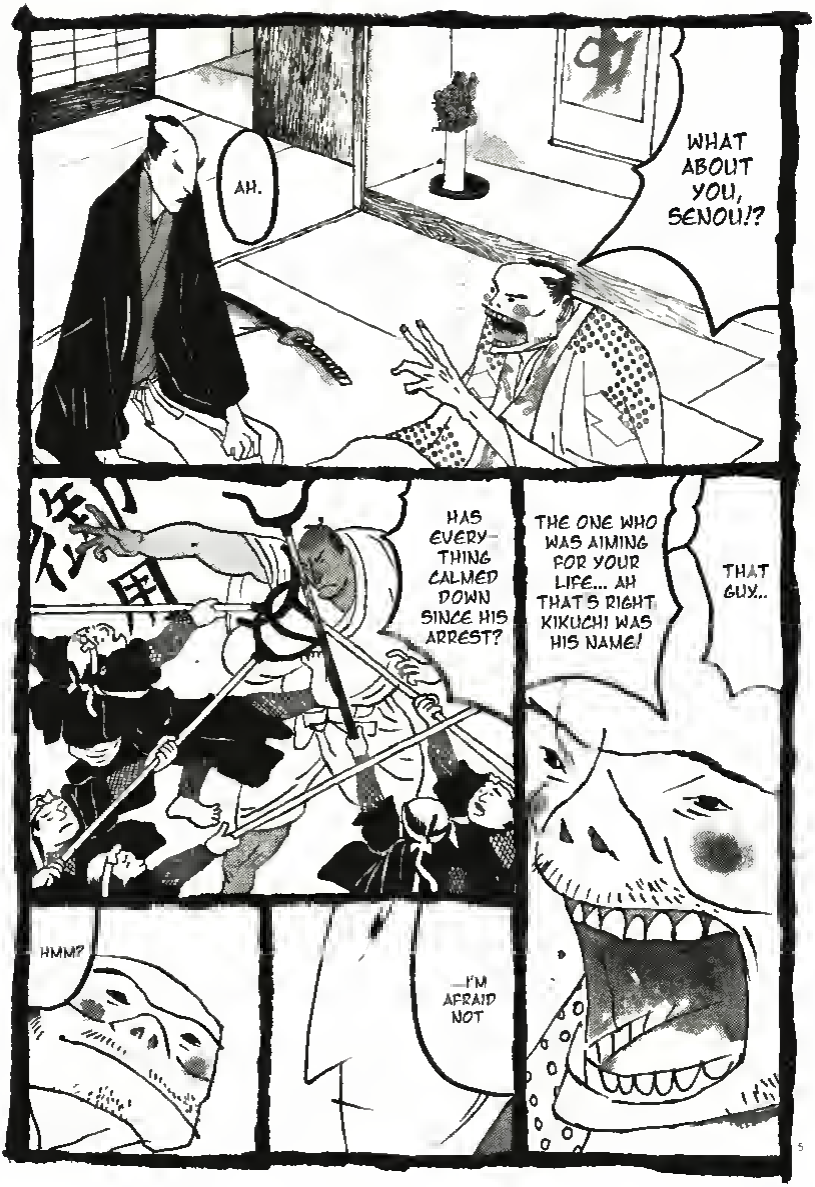
CHAPTER 42

THE DREAM THAT THE 3RD SON SEES

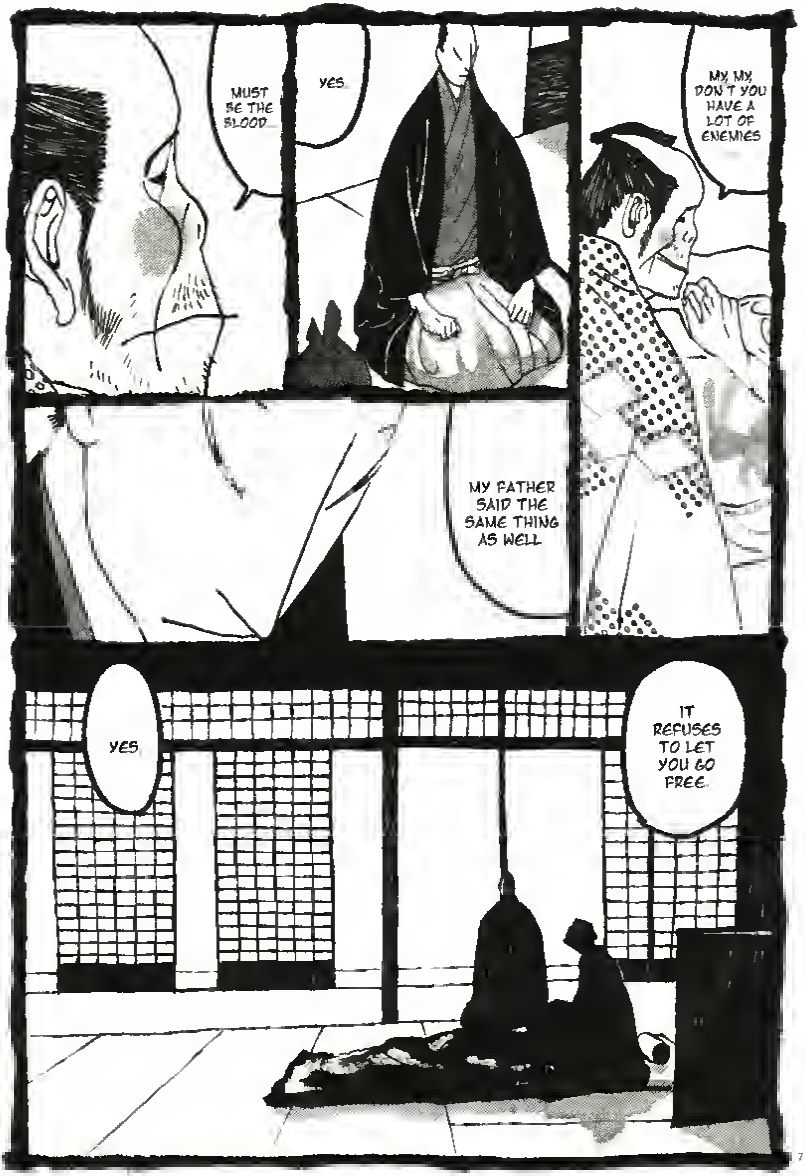

WOOF
MIKOSHI DAIZABUROU, NICKNAMED AS THE CRAB BY THE SERVANTS, HAD CAUGHT THE MEASLES AND SO SOUICHIROU CAME TO VISIT.
SEEMS LIKE YOU'VE LOST A BIT OF WEIGHT.
A BIT... YES, I BELIEVE SO.
HMM...
I'M STILL IN GOOD HEALTH.
NEVER-THELESS, I'M FINE, I'M FINE.

YES...
WELL, AT THE VERY LEAST, I WASN'T FEELING SO SICK THAT YOU NEEDED TO COME AND PAY A VISIT...
JUDGING FROM GENJI'S CONCERNED EXPRESSION,
I ASSUMED IT WASN'T SUCH A LIGHT ILLNESS TO IGNORE
I SEE,
HAHA
BY THE WAY I'VE HEARD A RUMOUR THAT A NEW MAN HAD APPEARED
DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HIM?
WELL...
HA,
EVEN IF I KNEW, I WOULDN'T TELL ANYONE ELSE

YOU KNOW, I'VE REALIZED SOME-THING BECAUSE OF MY RECENT ILLNESS.
I'VE ONLY CAUGHT THE MEASLES,
AND YET EVERY-ONE OTHER THAN GENJI AVOIDS ME LIKE THE PLAGUE
MOREOVER, MY WET NURSE PASSED AWAY 3 MONTHS AGO
I REALIZED THAT I'M LOSING MY PLACE TO BE WITH EACH PASSING DAY
AGHH, NO!
たぁ!
JUST LISTEN TO ME GRUM-BLING ON!


AH.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, SENOU!?
THAT GUY..
THE ONE WHO WAS AIMING FOR YOUR LIFE... AH THAT'S RIGHT KIKUCHI WAS HIS NAME!
HAS EVERY-THING CALMED DOWN SINCE HIS ARREST?
—I'M AFRAID NOT
HMM?

HAH!
ANOTHER MAN WHO DESIRES MY HEAD HAS APPEARED


MUST BE THE BLOOD...
YES.
MY, MY, DON'T YOU HAVE A LOT OF ENEMIES
MY FATHER SAID THE SAME THING AS WELL
YES.
IT REFUSES TO LET YOU GO FREE.

HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
エーイ
ハッ!
エーイ
ハッ!
エーイ

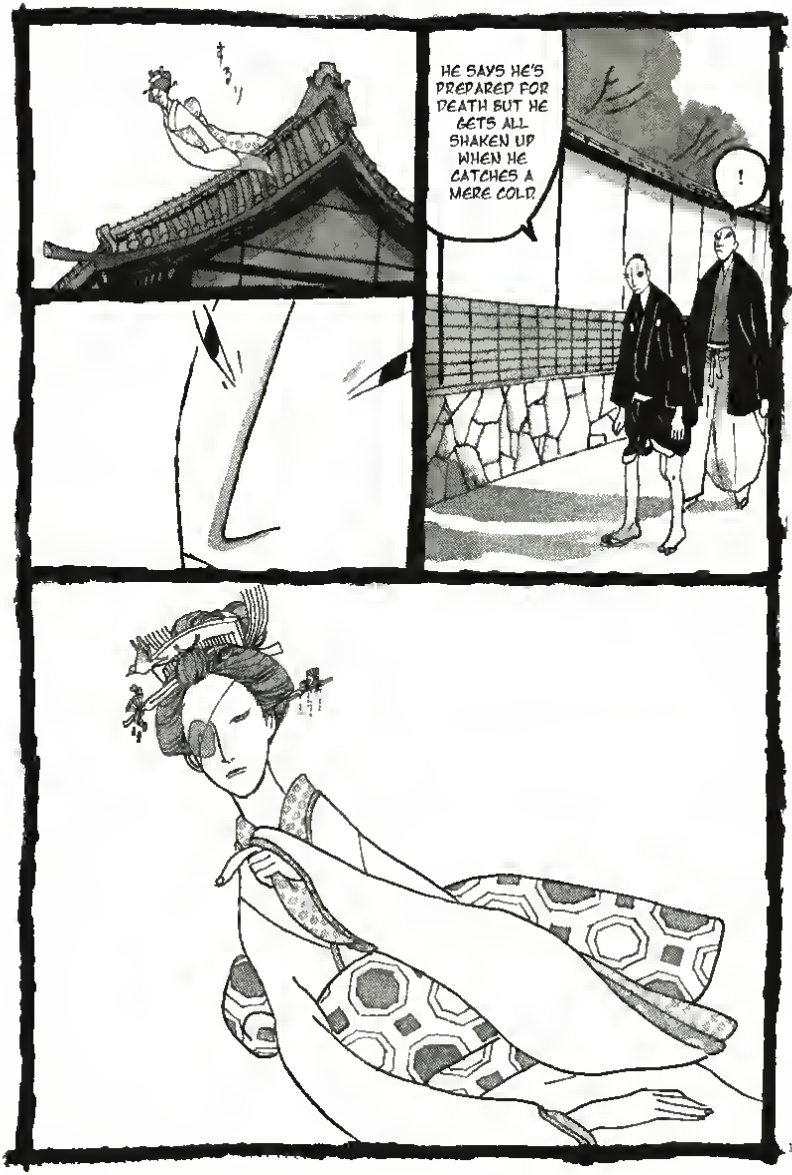
I'VE BEEN SEEING THE SAME DREAM THESE DAYS
A DREAM?
THE SAME DREAM EVER SINCE I ACQUIRED A CERTAIN SWORD
IS IT A DREAM ABOUT THE SOWRD?
NO,
IT'S ABOUT A WOMAN WHO WEARS A SWORDGUARD OVER HER EYE
.....

SHE COMES TO ME EVERY NIGHT IN MY DREAMS.
A WOMAN BEAUTIFUL ENOUGH TO LEAVE YOU BREATHLESS.
.....
I WONDER WHAT SHE'S SAYING ...?
AND IN THE DREAM, SHE COMPLAINS ABOUT SOMETHING BUT ALL I SEE IS HER MOUTH MOVING. I CANNOT HEAR HER.
AH... CAN'T SAY ANY-THING COMES TO MIND.
WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT SENOU?

BUT I MUST ADMIT THAT I AM ENVIOUS OF YOU.
TO BE ABLE TO LIVE BY THE SWORD IN SUCH A PEACEFUL AGE AS THIS
BUT THAT IS NOT WHAT I DESIRE
NO, YOU DO.
MAYBE NOT YOU YOURSELF BUT THE DEMON THAT LIVES WITHIN YOU DESIRES IT.
ふふ…
MY ILLNESS HAS MADE ME REALIZE THAT EVEN I WILL DIE SOME DAY
AND I WOULD HATE FOR MY DEATH TO COME AS I LIE SICK ON SOME TATAMI.
AS A WARRIOR I'VE ALWAYS LONGED TO DIE OUT ON THE BATTLEFIELDS.
カ!
カ!
カ!
カ!

I WISH TO GO OUT WHERE I CAN FIGHT FOR MY FELLOW COMRADES, MY LORD, AND MYSELF

HA
HA
HA
HE REALLY IS A TROUBLESOME MAN.
JUST LIKE A CHILD.


HE SAYS HE'S PREPARED FOR DEATH BUT HE GETS ALL SHAKEN UP WHEN HE CATCHES A MERE COLD.
!

LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE BEEN TAKEN WELL CARE OF KUNIFUSA...
IT'S BETTER IF YOU STAY HERE FOR NOW...
BUT HE GETS MUCH BETTER AS SOON AS HE SEES YOU SIR

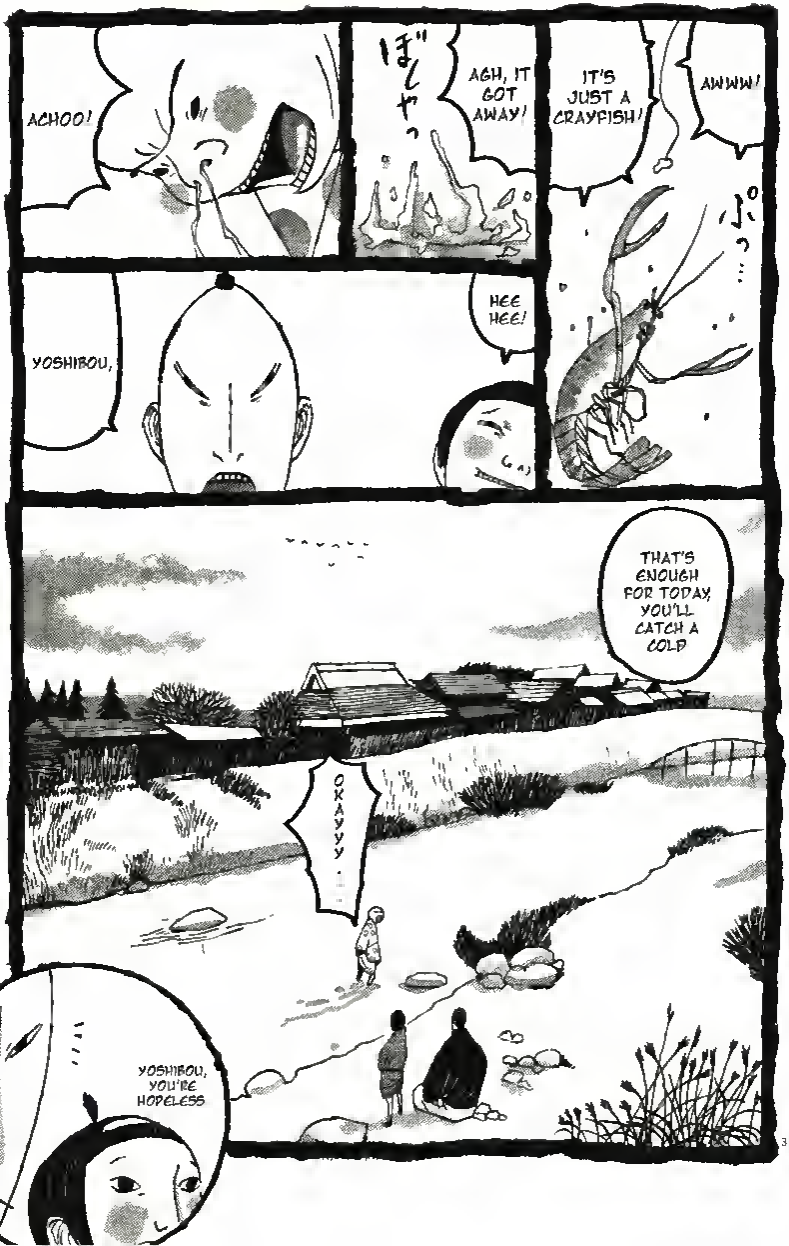
THAT NIGHT, DAIZABUROU DREAMT THE SAME DREAM.
AH, ARE YOU POURING ME A DRINK THIS FINE EVENING?
DID SOMETHING GOOD HAPPEN PERCHANCE?
HOW HE IMAGINES HIMSELF IN HIS DREAM

I WISH TO SEE YOUR SMILE MORE THAN ANYTHING
HOW ABOUT A SMILE THEN?
HA!

CHAPTER 43

MORI SAZATAROU'S FIGHTING SPIRIT

THE THREE OF THEM WENT TO THE RIVERBED TO RELAX...
AH!
AFTER SCHOOL,
I GOT ONE!
IT'S AN EEL! AN EEL!


ACHOO!
AGH, IT GOT AWAY!
IT'S JUST A CRAYFISH!
AWWW!
HEE HEE!
YOSHIBOU,
THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TODAY, YOU'LL CATCH A COLD
OKAYYY...
YOSHIBOU, YOU'RE HOPELESS

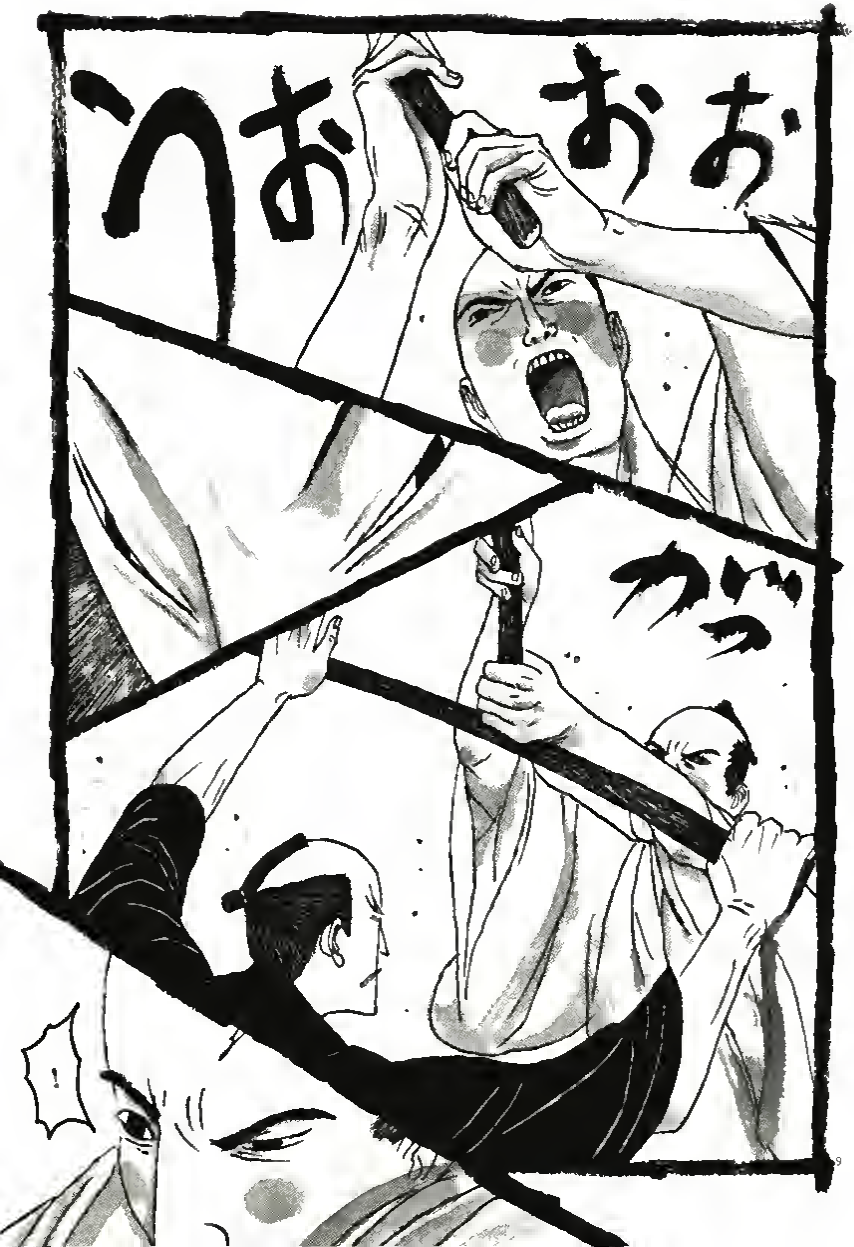
STEP
STEP
STEP
STEP
ざっ
STEP
STEP

TAP
TAKE IT, SENOU.
す…

AS YOU WISH.
GRIP

STEP
あ
あ
あ

GUH!
HUH?
THEY'RE NOT MOVING.


うおおお
ガッ
!

ぐぐぐ…ハメ…

ひぇぇぇ
!
ばばば!

GUH!
NGHH!

!?
ぐしゃ
すっ
うおお
おお

UGH!
AGH!
UH?
AARGH!

じゃっ
ぼっ
UGH!

HEY, TEACHER
HMM?
IS THAT SAMURAI ALRIGHT?
YES, HE'S ALRIGHT.

NO, HE'LL BE FINE.
HE'S NOT GOING TO DIE?

MORI SAZATAROU CRIED.
WITHOUT PAYING MIND TO ANYONE AROUND HIM,
HE CRIED HIS EYES OUT.

CHAPTER 44

FOCUSING LIGHT

CHAPTER 44

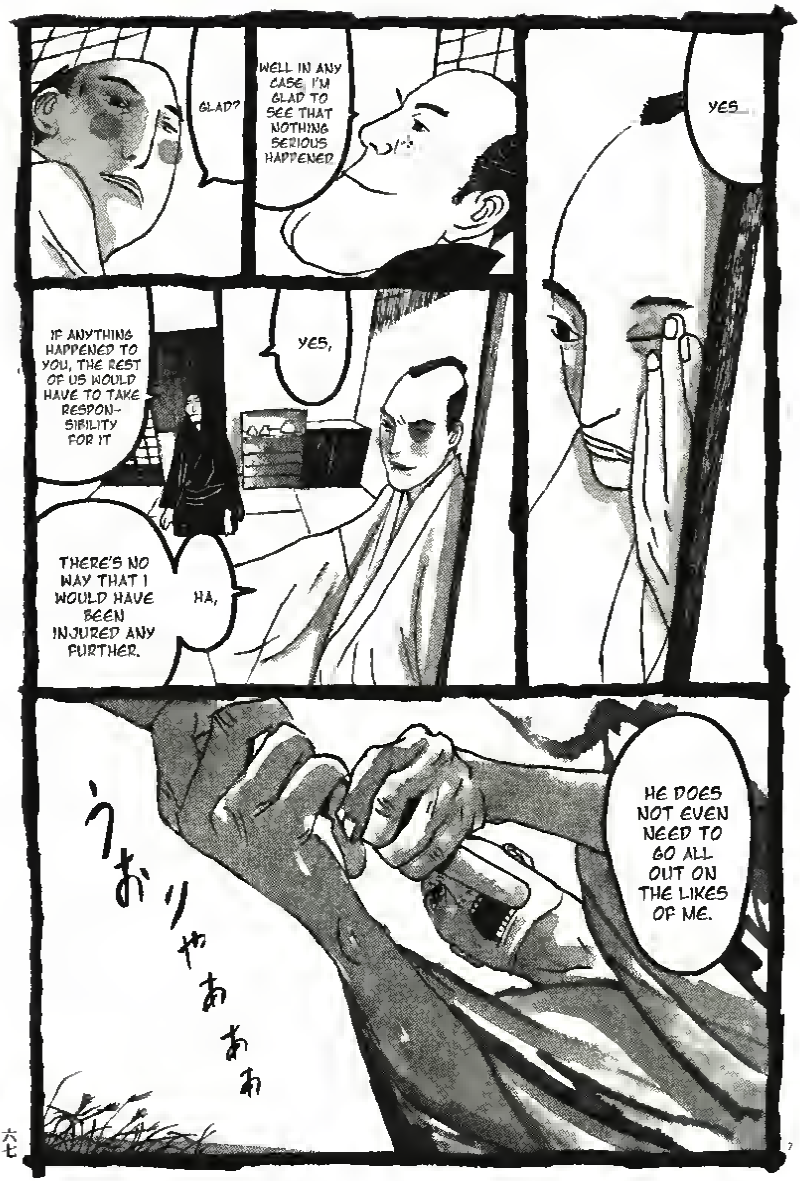
FOCUSING LIGHT

XODEN-MACHOU JAIL
HA HA HA
NICE AND SHINY
SQUEAK
SQUEAK

AND GATHER THE LIGHT...
JUST HOLD IT ABOVE LIKE THIS,
WHAT'S WRONG, MESHI? TOO BRIGHT FOR YOU? HAHA.
HMM?
HMM...
MUKOH MUKOH

2ND FLOOR OF THE APOTHECARY SHOP
CLIP
STEP
STEP
CLIP
CLIP
IT'S FINE. YOU CAN CARRY ON AS YOU WERE
TAP
STEP
HMM?

AH— THE OTHERS HAVE SOME DUTIES BACK AT THE EDO ESTATES.
WHERE'S EVERY-ONE?
SEEMS SIR HAS TAKEN QUITE A BEATING
SO YOU SAY BUT THEY'RE PROBABLY OFF PLAYING AT FUKAGAWA OR SOME PLACE.
HMPH,
SLIDE
.....

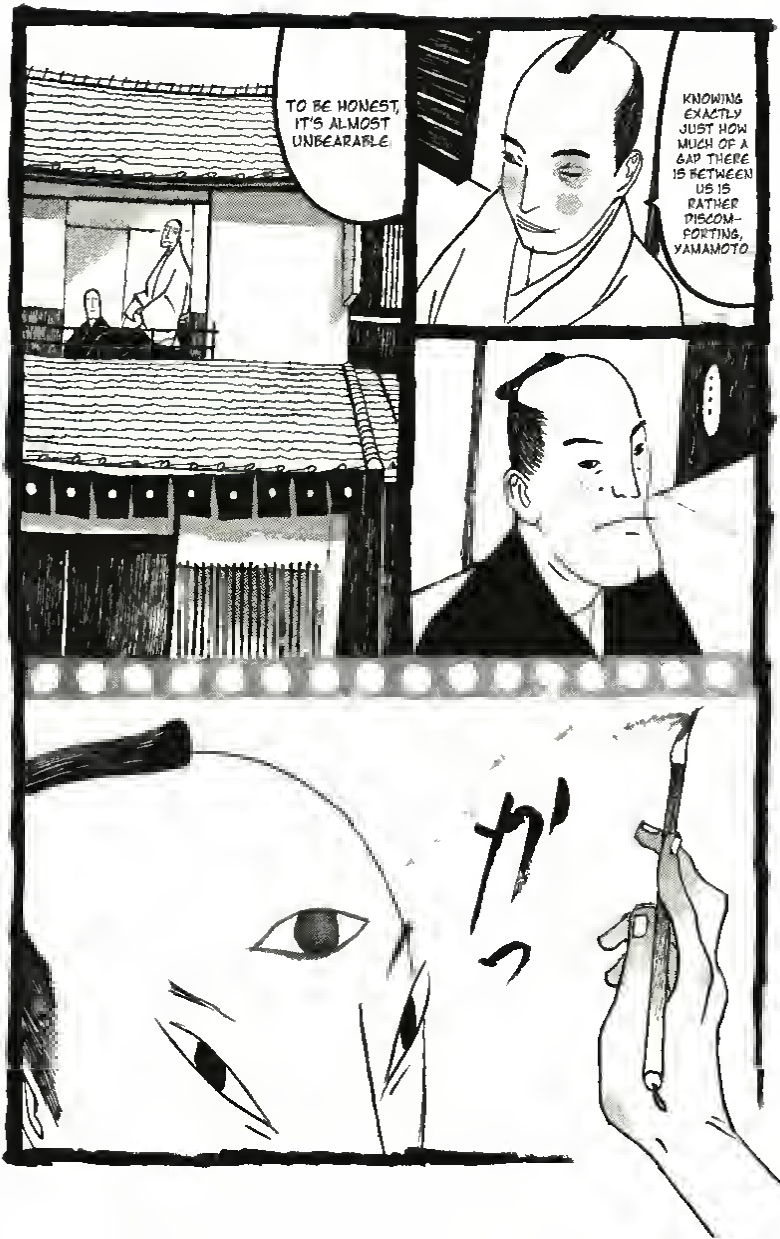

GLAD?
WELL IN ANY CASE, I'M GLAD TO SEE THAT NOTHING SERIOUS HAPPENED
YES...
IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO YOU, THE REST OF US WOULD HAVE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT
YES,
THERE'S NO WAY THAT I WOULD HAVE BEEN INJURED ANY FURTHER.
HA,
うおりゃあああ
HE DOES NOT EVEN NEED TO GO ALL OUT ON THE LIKES OF ME.

WE ARE NO MATCH FOR HIM.

WHEWWWW
NGHH ...
YEAH.
HE'S START-ING SOME-THING UP AGAIN.
BLOW
NAH, NO WAY.
MAYBE WE SHOULD TRY TO STOP HIM.

YOU'LL BE KILLED IF YOU GET IN HIS WAY.
THAT MAN WIELDS A DIFFERENT SWORD THAN THE REST OF US.
EVEN KIKUCHI MAY NOT BE ABLE TO CUT SENOU DOWN.

HA HA HA
HEE HEE
HEH HEH
HEE HEE HEE
HA HA


TO BE HONEST, IT'S ALMOST UNBEARABLE
KNOWING EXACTLY JUST HOW MUCH OF A GAP THERE IS BETWEEN US IS RATHER DISCOM-FORTING, YAMAMOTO

GRRR!!!
あ
あ
あ
BLOW
BLOW
BLOW
BLOW
BLOW
BLOW

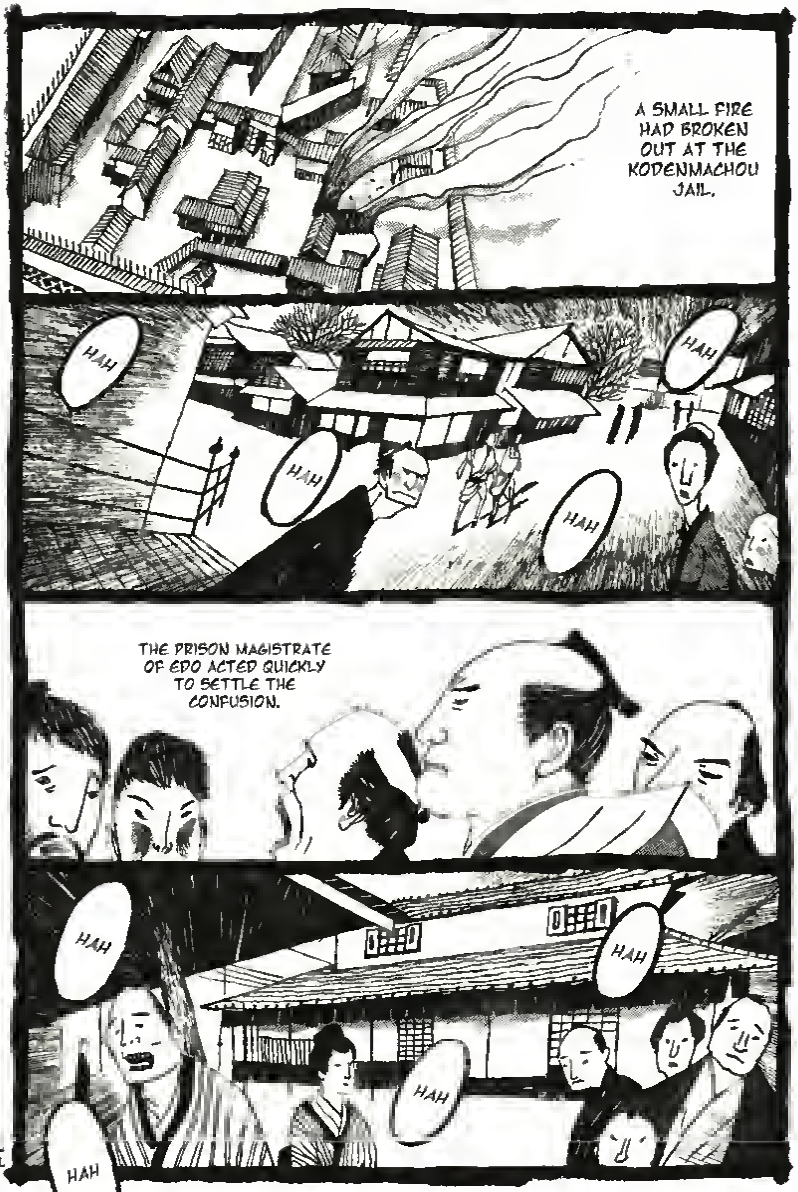
THE FISH WERE ONLY PUT OUT FOR A LITTLE WHILE AND THEY RE ALREADY COM- RLETELY DRIED UR
IT'S QUITE HOT TODAY ISN T IT?
HA HA
HA HA

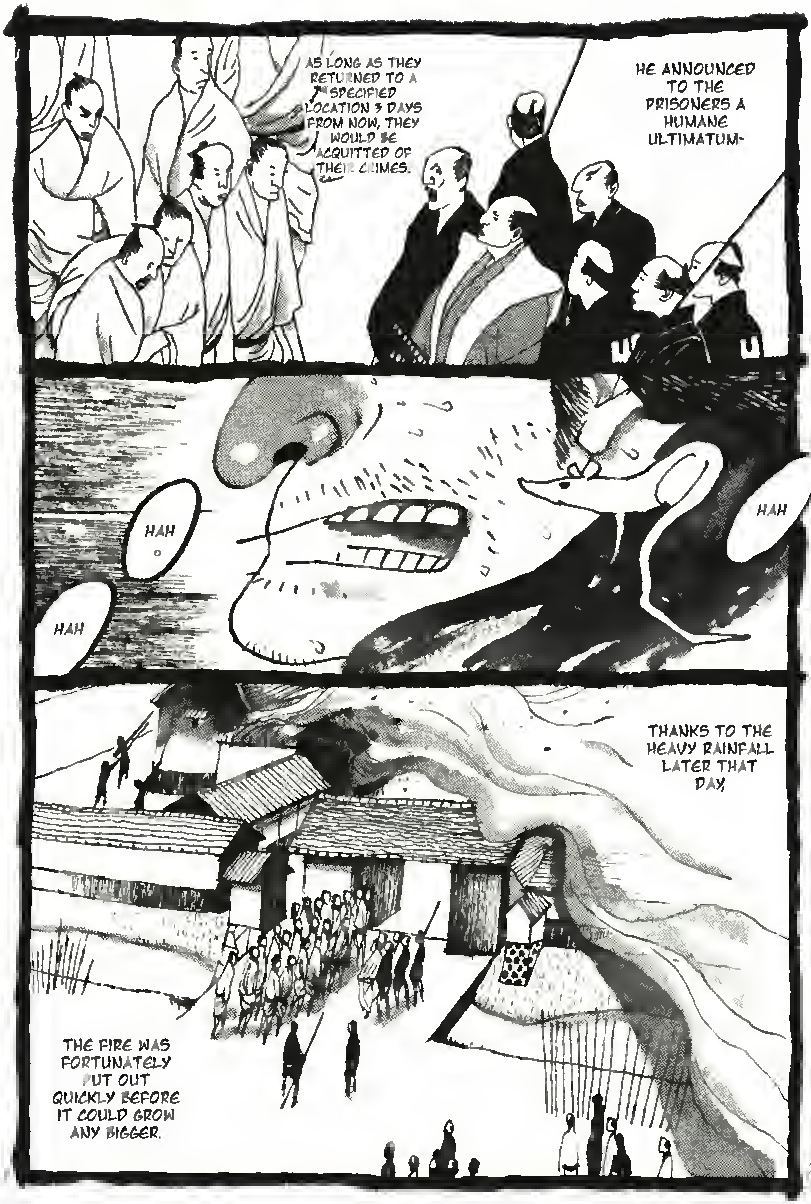
チャリン
NICE BREEZE
ああぁ
RING
I...
PANT
PANT
SO HOT...
SMELL...
PANT
SOMETHING BURNING...
PANT

カン
カン
カン
カン
カン
GONG
GONG
GONG
GONG
GONG

WE HAVE TO GET THE PRISON-ERS OUT!
CALM DOWN!
BUT WE CAN'T JUST EXTIN-GUISH IT!!
THERE'S A FIRE IN PRISON #2!
あ
HELP! OPEN UP!!!
AGHHH, LET US OUT!

KODENMA-CHOU JAIL, 2 IN THE AFTERNOON
GONG
GONG
GONG
GONG

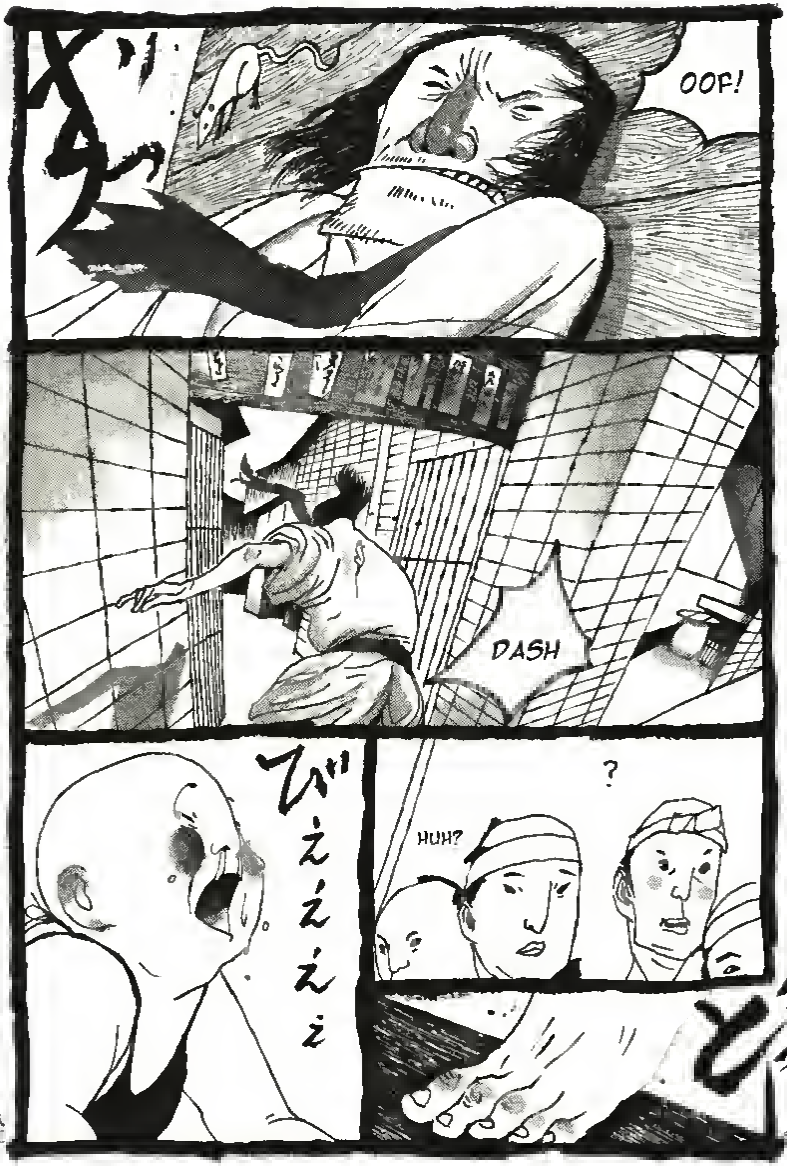

A SMALL FIRE HAD BROKEN OUT AT THE KODENMACHOU JAIL.
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
THE PRISON MAGISTRATE OF EDO ACTED QUICKLY TO SETTLE THE CONFUSION.
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH

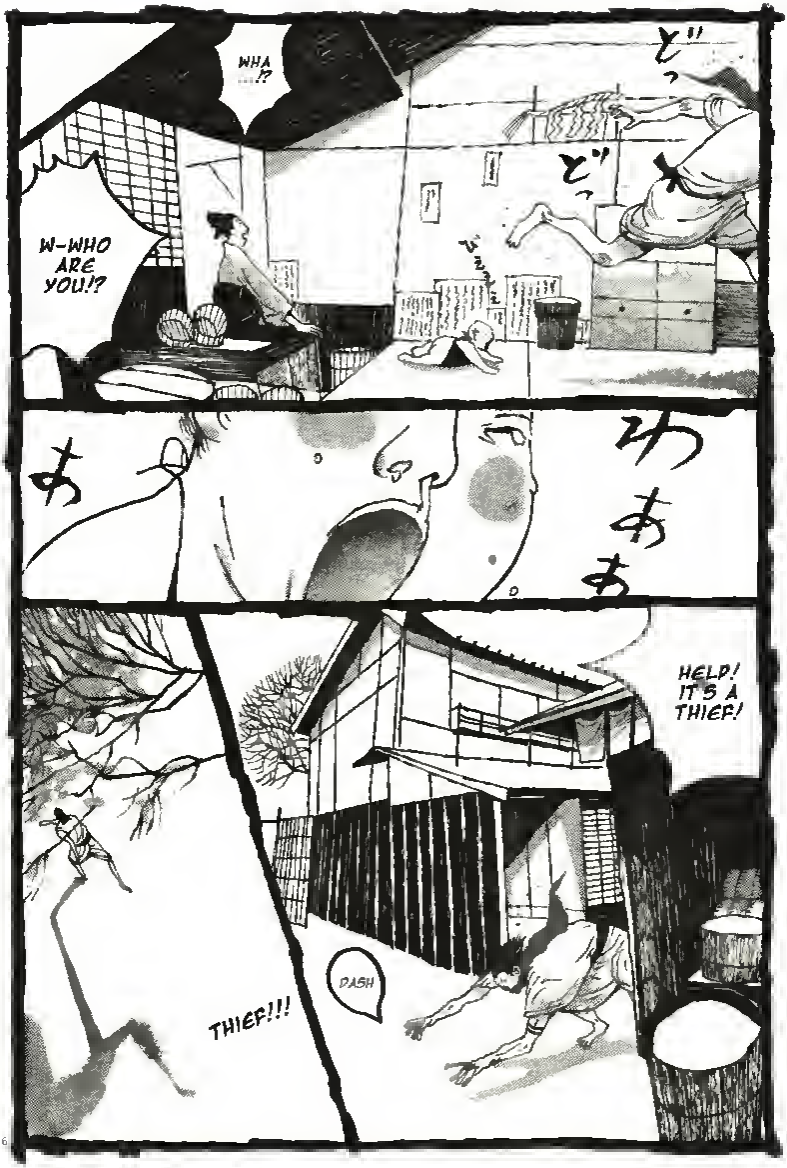

AS LONG AS THEY RETURNED TO A SPECIFIED LOCATION 5 DAYS FROM NOW, THEY WOULD BE ACQUITTED OF THEIR CRIMES.
HE ANNOUNCED TO THE PRISONERS A HUMANE ULTIMATUM-
HAH
HAH
HAH
THANKS TO THE HEAVY RAINFALL LATER THAT DAY,
THE FIRE WAS FORTUNATELY PUT OUT QUICKLY BEFORE IT COULD GROW ANY BIGGER.

CHAPTER 45

KIKUCHI ON THE RUN

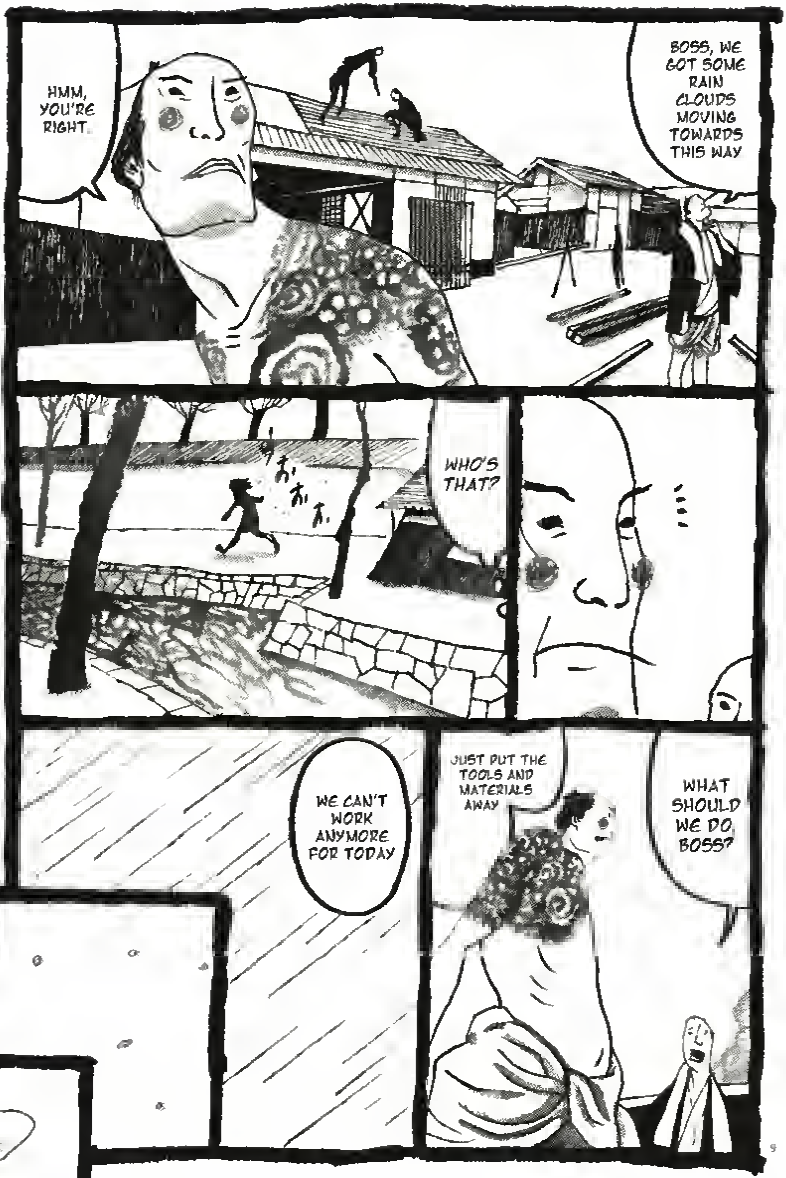
AGH!
ARGHHHHHHHH
YOU IDIOT!
HEY WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING!!
!


OOF!
DASH
?
HUH?

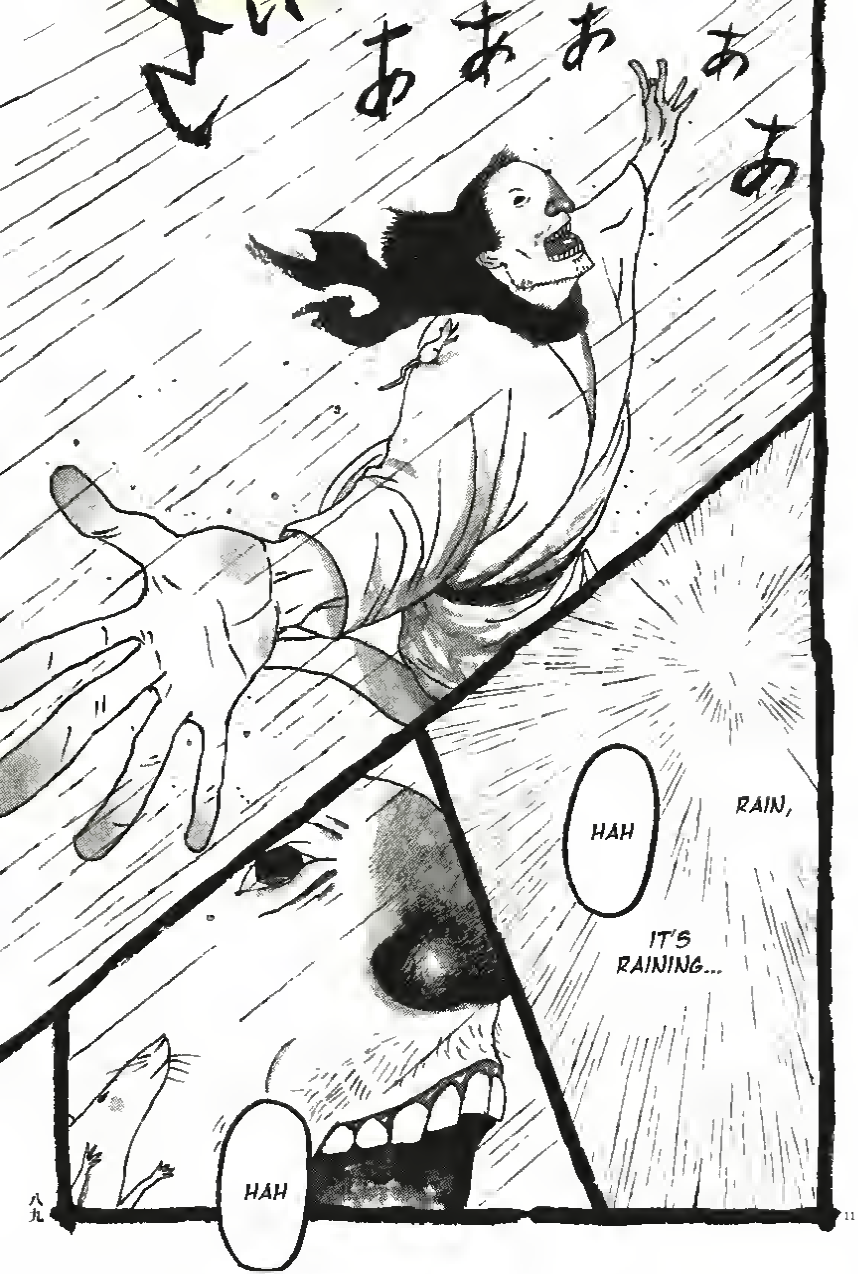

WHA...!?
W-WHO ARE YOU!?
どっ!!
どっ
どっ
ずるっ
あ
あ
あ
HELP! IT'S A THIEF!
DASH
THIEF!!!

HAH
HAH
NGHHH...!
ARGHHH...

HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH


BOSS, WE GOT SOME RAIN CLOUDS MOVING TOWARDS THIS WAY
HMM, YOU'RE RIGHT.
WHO'S THAT?
WHAT SHOULD WE DO, BOSS?
JUST PUT THE TOOLS AND MATERIALS AWAY
WE CAN'T WORK ANYMORE FOR TODAY

さあああ


あ あ あ あ
HAH
RAIN,
IT'S RAINING...
HAH

HAH
HAH
FATHER...
HAH
HAH
HAH
IT'S RAIN.
HAH

HAH
HAH
MOTHER...
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
SISTER...

HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
あ"

HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH

ドゴ
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH

あ
おおお
おおおお

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あ
あ
あ
う
おおおお

ナ〜あああ
CHAPTER 16
THE HORSE AND THE MAN
THE BLOWING WINDS LED THE WAY FOR WINTER TO BEGIN.
HAHA
OUTSKIRTS OF EDO

HA HA
SQUEAK SQUEAK
KIKUCHI SHINNOSUKE WITH MESHI.
HMM?
HOW'D IT FALL IN THERE?
GET THE ROPE!
DON'T MOVE, AO

IT'D BE BETTER TO JUST PUT HER OUT OF HER MISERY
POOR OLD AO'S TOO OLD TO HAVE THE STRENGTH TO PULL HERSELF BACK OUT.
FINE...
BUT THAT'S...
OR WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE HER DIE A SLOW PAINFUL DEATH!?
PLEASE DON'T HATE ME FOR THIS.
SORRY GIRL. BUT IT'S THE AFTERLIFE FOR YOU

YOU GOTTA KILL HER WITH ONE BLOW!
MOKICHI, RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF HER HEAD!
WOAH, GIRL, CALM DOWN.
HM?
MAKE SURE YOU GET IT RIGHT!
SQUISH

UGH!
IDIOT—

W-WHO ARE YOU!?
M-MOKICHI!
UGH...
STOP SHOUTING.
ばっ!!
YOU'RE AGITAT-ING, THE HOUSE.
WHAT?
AH...
THAT GUY IS...

WHAT DO YOU KNOW HIM?
EASY THERE
YOUR NOSE IS...
IT WAS BACK WHEN I WENT TO KANDA TO SELL PUMP-KINS...
KANDA
KIKUCHI?
THERE, GOOD GIRL...
NEIGH
NEIGH

YEAH.
YEAH, YOU REMEMBER HOW THERE WAS A FIRE AT THE KODEN-MACHOU JAIL RECENTLY?
THAT'S WHAT THE AUTHORITIES ALWAYS SAY.
BUT I HEARD THAT ALL THE PRISONERS RETURNED BACK TO JAIL.
WELL APPARENTLY THERE'S A RUMOUR THAT THIS FELLA [illegible] THAT CHANCE TO BREAK OUT OF PRISON.
THEY ALWAYS TRY TO COVER UP ANY BAD NEWS.

HMM?
HEY, WHY DON'T YOU PAINT YOUR NOSE RED AND COME TO THE MAGISTRATE'S OFFICE WITH ME?
WHOO, THAT'S QUITE A LOT.
IN ANY CASE, THAT NOTICE SAYS THAT IF SOMEONE CATCHES AND RETURNS THE WANTED MAN TO THE MAGISTRATE'S OFFICE, THEY'LL BE REWARDED WITH 30 RYO.
I'D LIKE TO KEEP MY HEAD ON MY NECK FOR THE TIME BEING
HA, SORRY BUT I'LL PASS.
I'LL GIVE YOU HALF THE REWARD MONEY
MOREOVER THAT GUY'S SUPPOSED TO HAVE A PET RAT THAT HE KEEPS WITH HIM AT ALL TIMES
HUH, I SEE...

KIKUCHI
JUST FORGET ABOUT THE HORSE!
HEY, YOU GOT TO PULL YOURSELF OUT BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
GRAB ON TO THE ROPE!
HUFF
MMM...

HURRY AND GRAB THE ROPE OR YOU'LL DIE!
NEIGHHH
AHHH
JUST LET GO OF THE HORSE!
AHH
HURRY!

!!!
!!!!
BRING ALL THE MEN HERE RIGHT AWAY!!!
QUICKLY!
CALL THE GUYS FROM THE VILLAGE!
NEIGH!!!
WAIT...

AO IS
.....
HMM?
RISE
RISE

ぼっ
んんんん

お
お
お
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP

NEIGHHH
BOY, WERE WE EVER AMAZED!
THANKS FOR ALL YOUR HELP
NEVER SEEN A MAN AS STRONG AS YOU.
DON'T NEED IT.
OUR VILLAGE IS JUST HALF A LI FROM HERE. SO IF YOU COME WE CAN GIVE YOU A PROPER THANK YOU OF SORTS
YES.
.....

SQUEAK
COME, MESHI
JUMP
ナ
あ
あ
あ

DEFINITELY NOT A MAN FROM AROUND THESE PARTS.
YEAH,
STRANGE GUY..
I WAS THINKING OF ANOTHER GUY...
HM?
AH THAT'S RIGHT. DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU KNEW HIM MOKICHI?
AH...
NO...
NEIGHHH

CHAPTER 47

MEMORIES OF A MOUNTAIN

SWING

AGAIN...

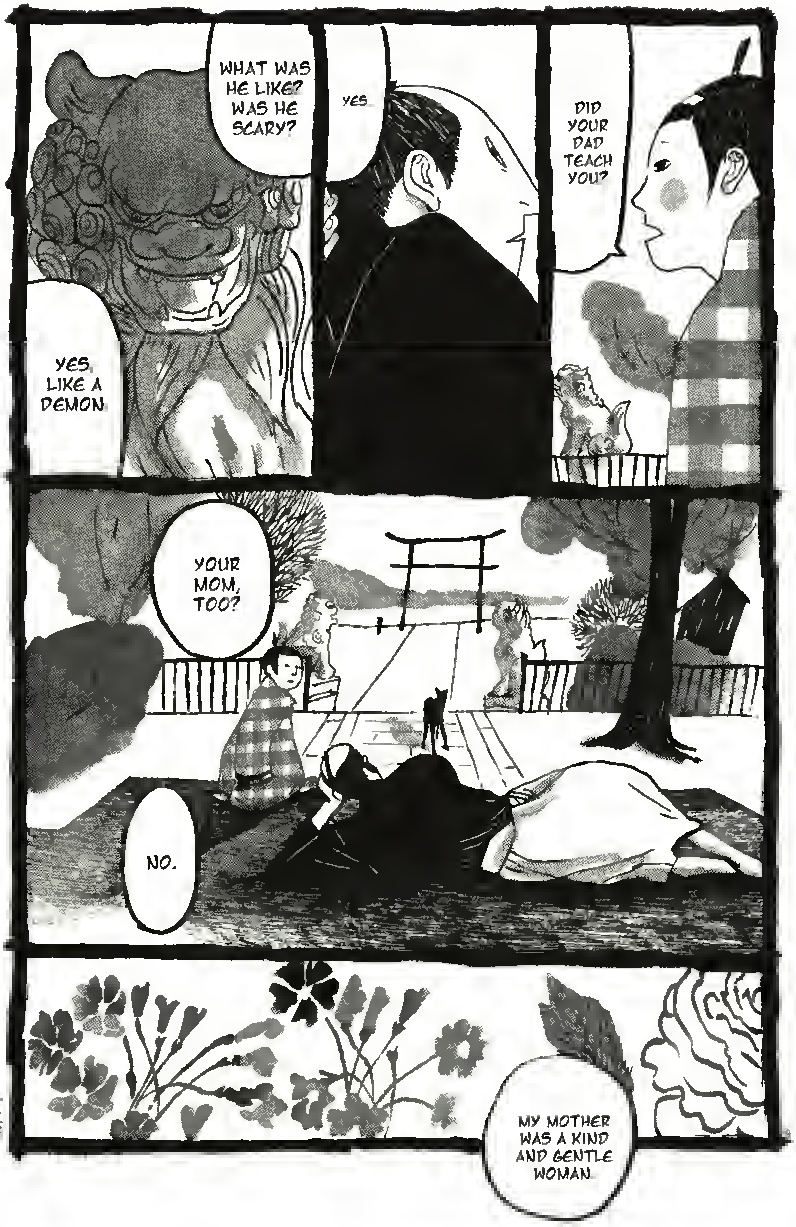
ほぉぉぉ
ぉ
ぉ
ひゅ
ぉぉぉぉ
ひゅ

MNN.
HAH!
YAHH!

HEY, SOU.
I'M NOT GOING TO TEACH YOU HOW TO FIGHT WITH A SWORD.
HAH
HAH
HAH
OH COME ON, YOU BIG MEANIE!

WELL, BACK WHEN YOU WERE FIGHTING THAT SAMURAI,
I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T LIKE ME USING A SWORD
...
WHY DO YOU WANT TO LEARN ANYWAYS?
I THOUGHT YOU LOOKED REALLY STRONG...
THE STRONG ARE THOSE WHO WIN WITHOUT FIGHTING.
I WANNA BE STRONG TOO.

...PSH,
FIGHTING TO DISPLAY ONE'S POWER IS WHAT WEAKLINGS DO.
PANT
PANT
PANT
PANT
MY LEGS FEEL HEAVY...
PANT
PANT
BOOORING
THAT'S SO BORING.
PANT
AH...
MAYBE IT'S JUST MY OLD AGE...

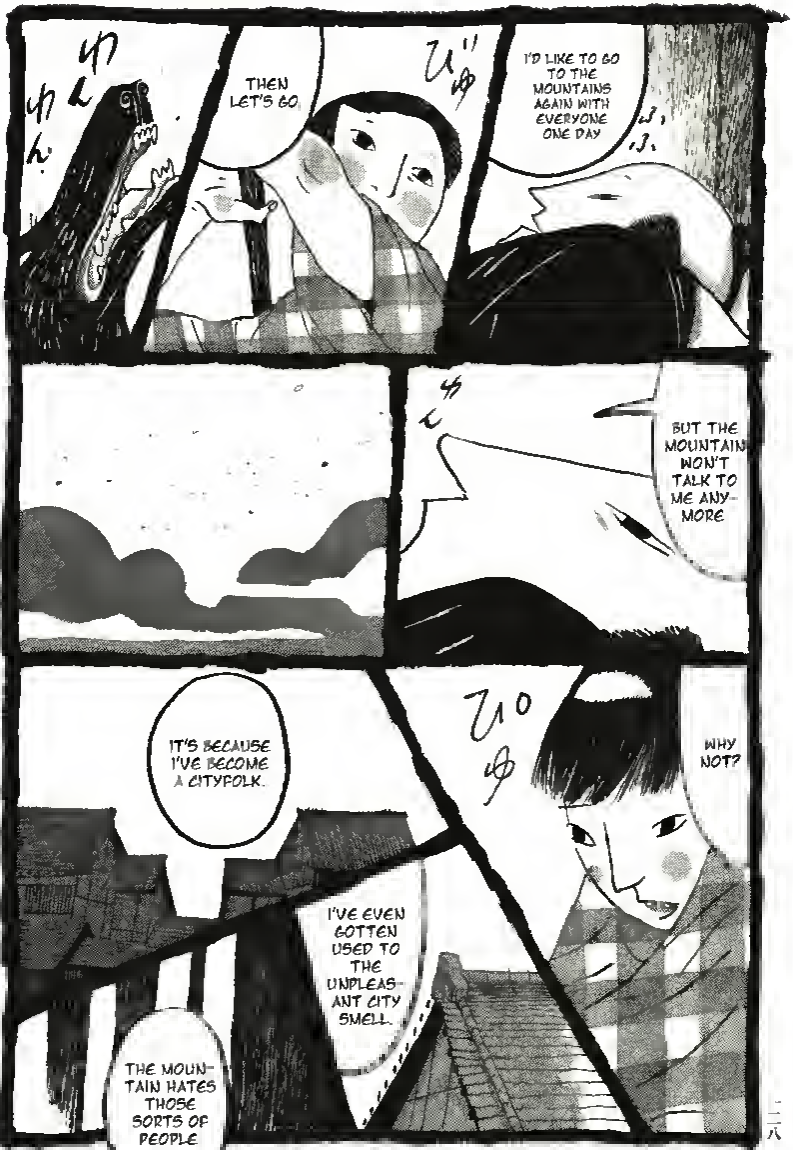

DID YOUR DAD TEACH YOU?
YES.
WHAT WAS HE LIKE? WAS HE SCARY?
YES, LIKE A DEMON.
YOUR MOM, TOO?
NO.
MY MOTHER WAS A KIND AND GENTLE WOMAN.

SHE KNEW THE NAMES OF ALL THE FLOWERS OF THE FIELD BY HEART AND TAUGHT ME AS WELL.
HMM...
SHE DETESTED SWORDS.
MORNING GLORY
THISTLE FLOWER

WERE YOU LONELY?
LONELY?
WASN'T IT JUST THE 3 OF YOU LIVING ALONE ON A MOUNTAIN?
THINKING THAT I WOULD BE LONELY IS MERELY THE PERSPECTIVE OF ONE WHO KNOWS WHAT IT'S LIKE TO LIVE SURROUNDED BY OTHERS
MOREOVER, I HAD THE MOUNTAIN TO ACCOMPANY ME
THE MOUNTAIN?

I TALKED ABOUT MANY THINGS WITH THE MOUNTAIN.
NO, THE MOUNTAIN CAN TALK OF MANY THINGS AS WELL.
BUT MOUNTAINS CAN'T TALK, SOU.
IT'LL EXPRESS ITS TEMPER TO YOU TOO.
AND WHEN IT'S ANGRY

HMM?
AH, WHATEVER.
STEP
YOUR USUAL CONFUSING TALK
AGAIN?
THAT AGAIN?
YAHH!
SWING
WHAT'D I DO!?


I'D LIKE TO GO TO THE MOUNTAINS AGAIN WITH EVERYONE ONE DAY
THEN LET'S GO.
BUT THE MOUNTAIN WON'T TALK TO ME ANY-MORE
WHY NOT?
I'VE EVEN GOTTEN USED TO THE UNPLEAS-ANT CITY SMELL.
IT'S BECAUSE I'VE BECOME A CITYFOLK.
THE MOUN-TAIN HATES THOSE SORTS OF PEOPLE

IT SHUTS ITSELF TIGHTLY AND REFUSES TO OPEN
IT WON'T INVITE ME IN ANYMORE
THE MOUNTAIN HAS ALREADY...

YAHH!
THAT'S NOT TRUE!!
HMPH
THERE'S NO WAY THE MOUNTAINS WOULD BE SO CRUEL.
I'M SURE IT'LL TALK TO YOU WHENEVER YOU VISIT AGAIN

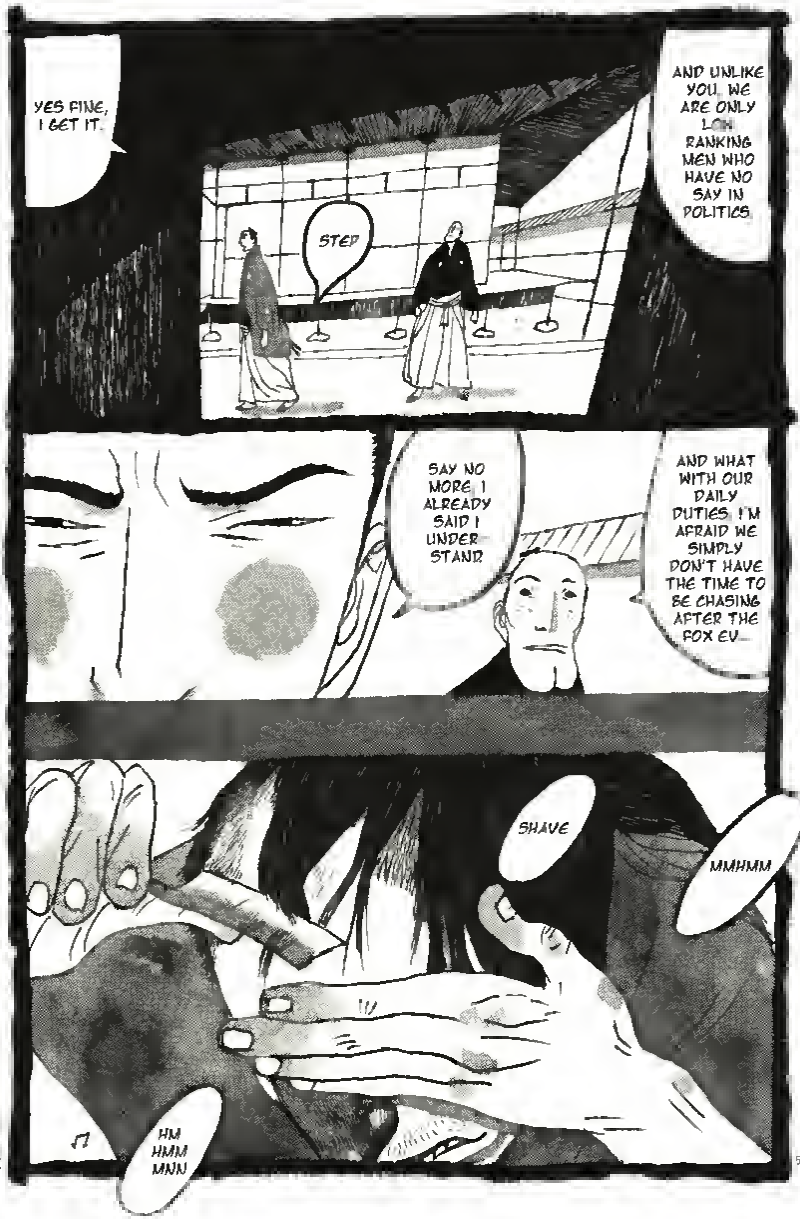
I'M SURE THAT HAS TO BE THE CASE!
HMM...

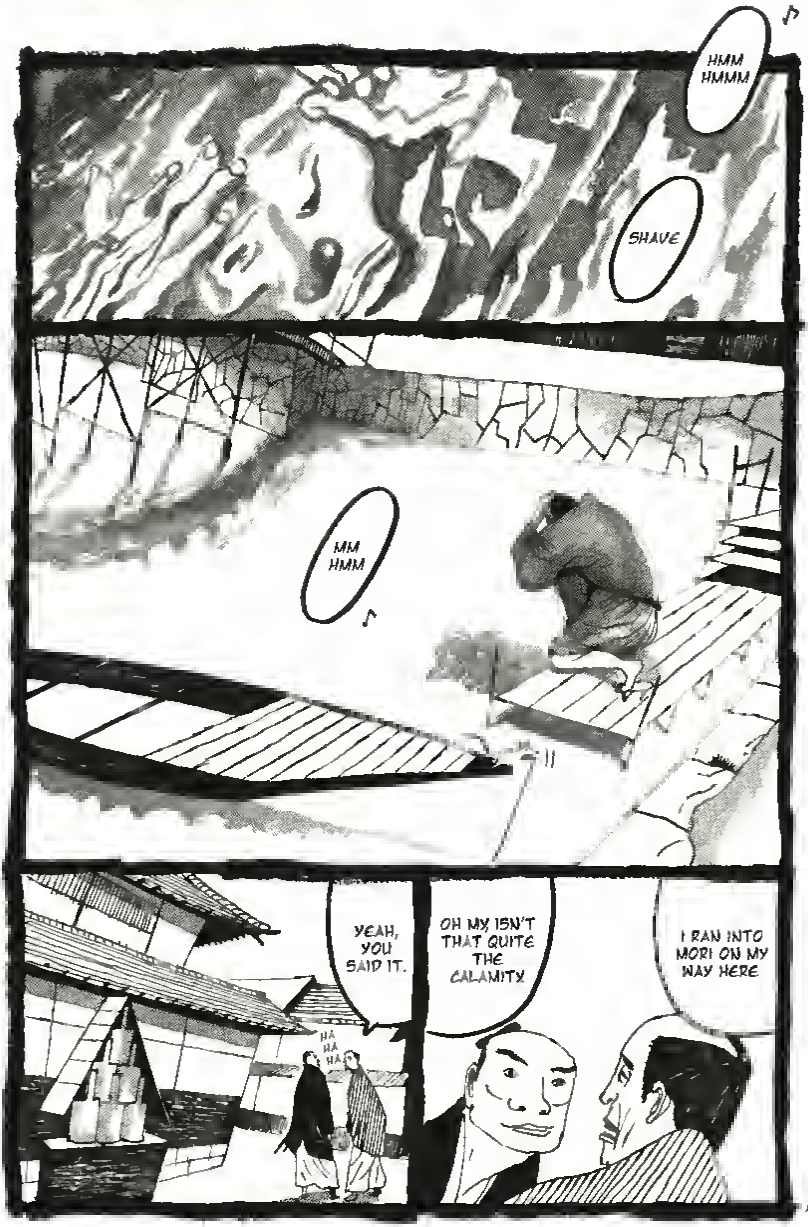
WOOF!
HMPH.
I HATE DOGS

ASSASSINATION
CHAPTER 48

THE TAKI HOUSE'S RESIDENCES IN EDO
AH, IF IT ISN'T TAGUCHI
AH...
GOOD DAY, SIR.
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU AT THE APOTHECARY SHOP LATELY. HAS SOMETHING HAPPENED?
AH, YES, SIR... I MUST ADMIT THAT I HAVEN'T SHOWN UP THESE DAYS...
IS THAT SO?
BUT THAT'S ONLY BECAUSE I'VE BEEN SWAMPED WITH THE NECCESSARY ARRANGEMENTS FOR OUR LORD'S NEXT VISIT TO EDO.
BUT I PROMISE THAT I'LL BE THERE THE NEXT TIME I'M OFF-DUTY
I MUST GET GOING NOW, EXCUSE ME.

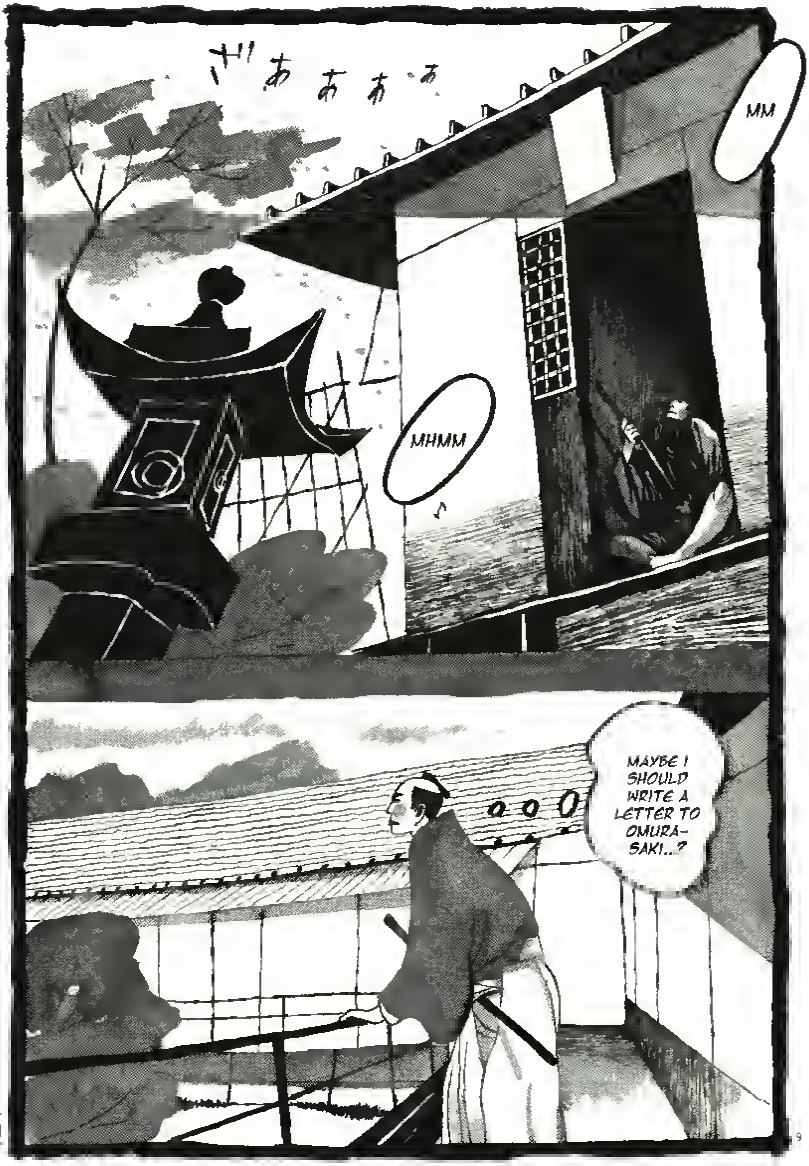
……
YAMAMOTO!
I'M AFRAID EVERYONE IS FEELING A LITTLE WEARY WITH THE WHOLE MATTER.
EVEN BEFORE YOU CAME, WE HAVE BEEN CONSTANTLY MONITORING THE FOX.
DAY AFTER DAY AND NIGHT AFTER NIGHT.
BUT THE FOX HAS CHOSEN TO BECOME A TEACHER AND SURROUND HIMSELF WITH THE LOCAL CHILDREN.
WHEW!

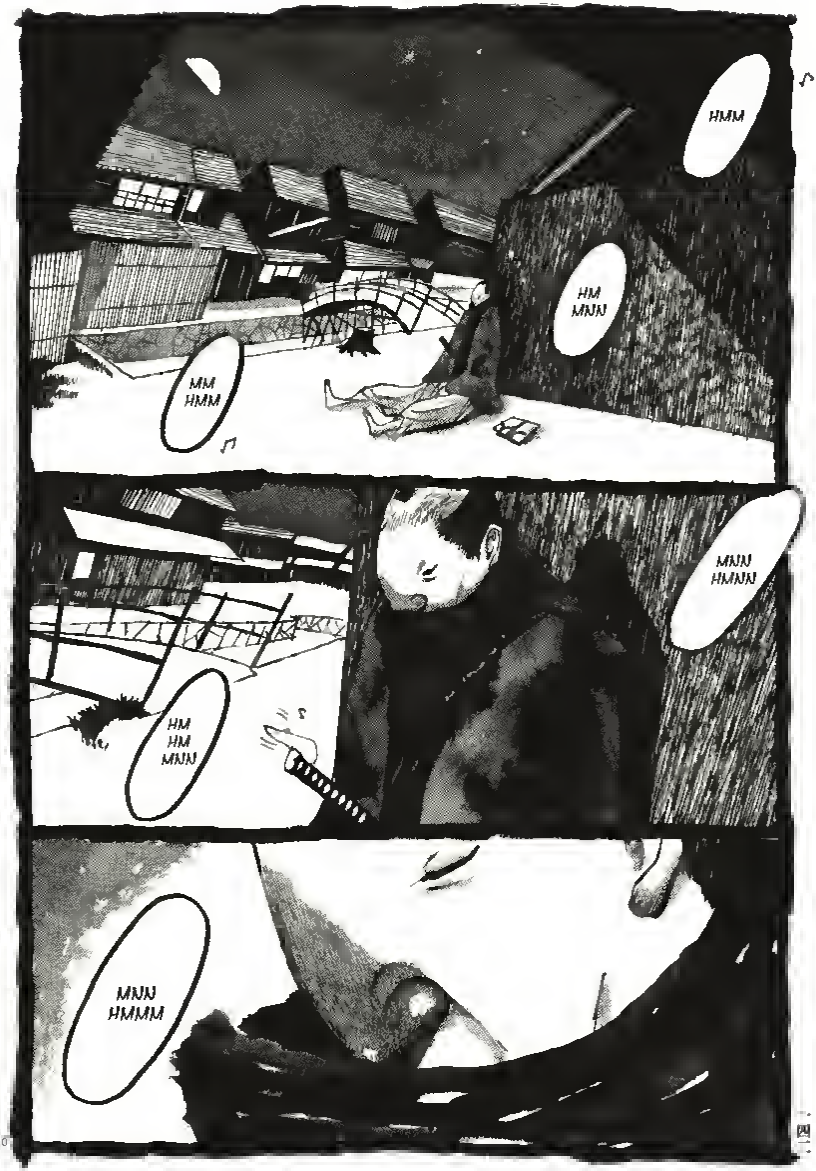

YES FINE, I GET IT.
STEP
AND UNLIKE YOU, WE ARE ONLY LOW RANKING MEN WHO HAVE NO SAY IN POLITICS.
SAY NO MORE. I ALREADY SAID I UNDER-STAND
AND WHAT WITH OUR DAILY DUTIES, I'M AFRAID WE SIMPLY DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO BE CHASING AFTER THE FOX EV...
SHAVE
MMHMM
HM HMM MNN

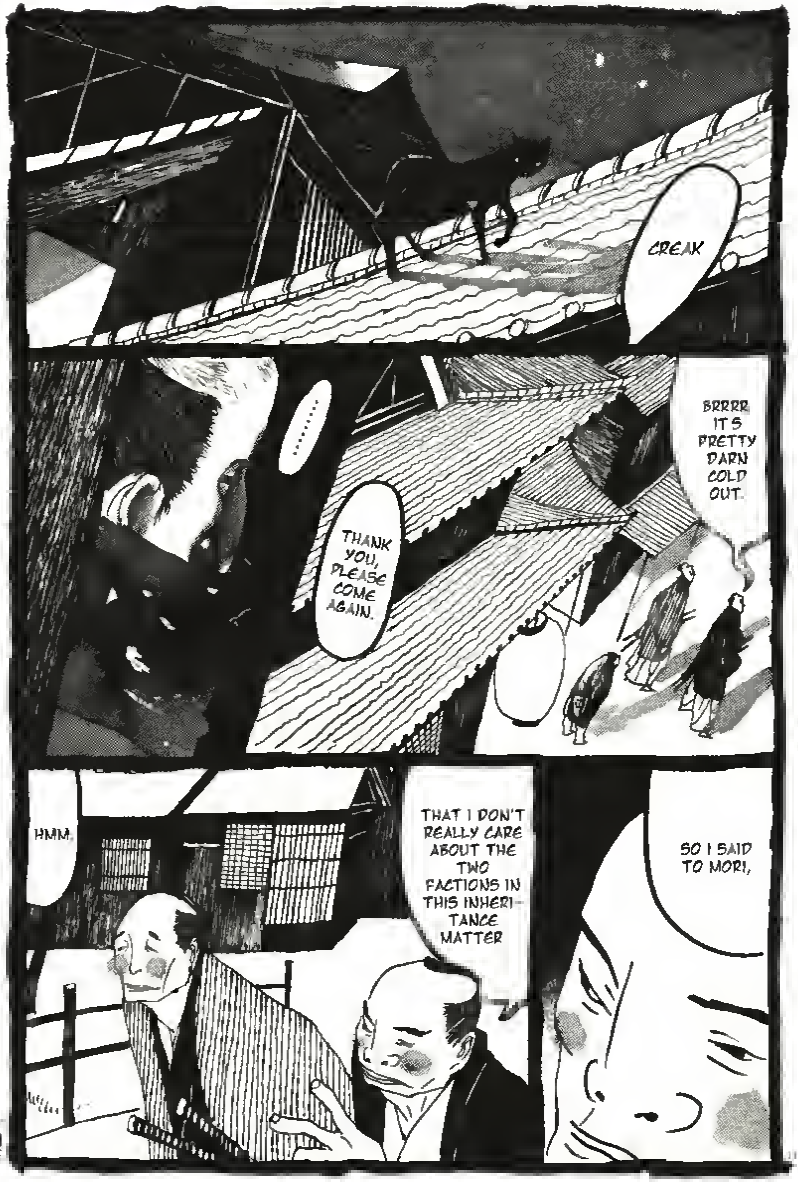

HMM HMMM
SHAVE
MM HMM
I RAN INTO MORI ON MY WAY HERE
OH MY, ISN'T THAT QUITE THE CALAMITY
YEAH, YOU SAID IT.
HA HA HA

I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS TOWN AND ITS STENCH OF BLOOD
I'M GONNA LEAVE ON A TRIP
HA HA HA
LET'S ALL BEWARE OF ANOTHER FIRE!
I SWEAR I'LL LEAVE.

♪
HMM
MHMM
HMMM
CREAK...
GRIP
SHING


MM
MHMM
MAYBE I SHOULD WRITE A LETTER TO OMURA-SAKI..?

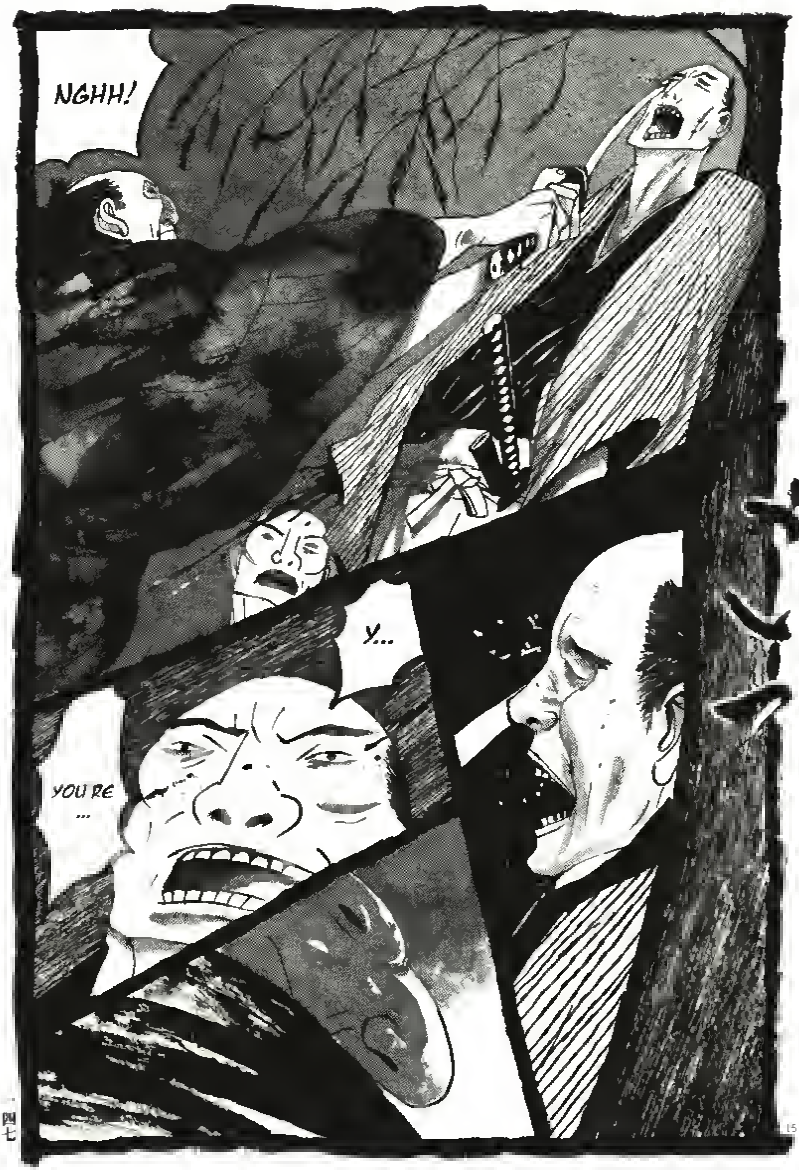

HMM
HM MNN
MM HMM
MNN HMNN
HM HM MNN
MNN HMMM


CREAK
BRRRR IT'S PRETTY DARN COLD OUT.
.....
THANK YOU, PLEASE COME AGAIN.
SO I SAID TO MORI,
THAT I DON'T REALLY CARE ABOUT THE TWO FACTIONS IN THIS INHERITANCE MATTER
HMM.

AND THAT THIS WHOLE DISPUTE IS JUST A GAME FOR THOSE IN POWER
M H M M
SHING
HMM?

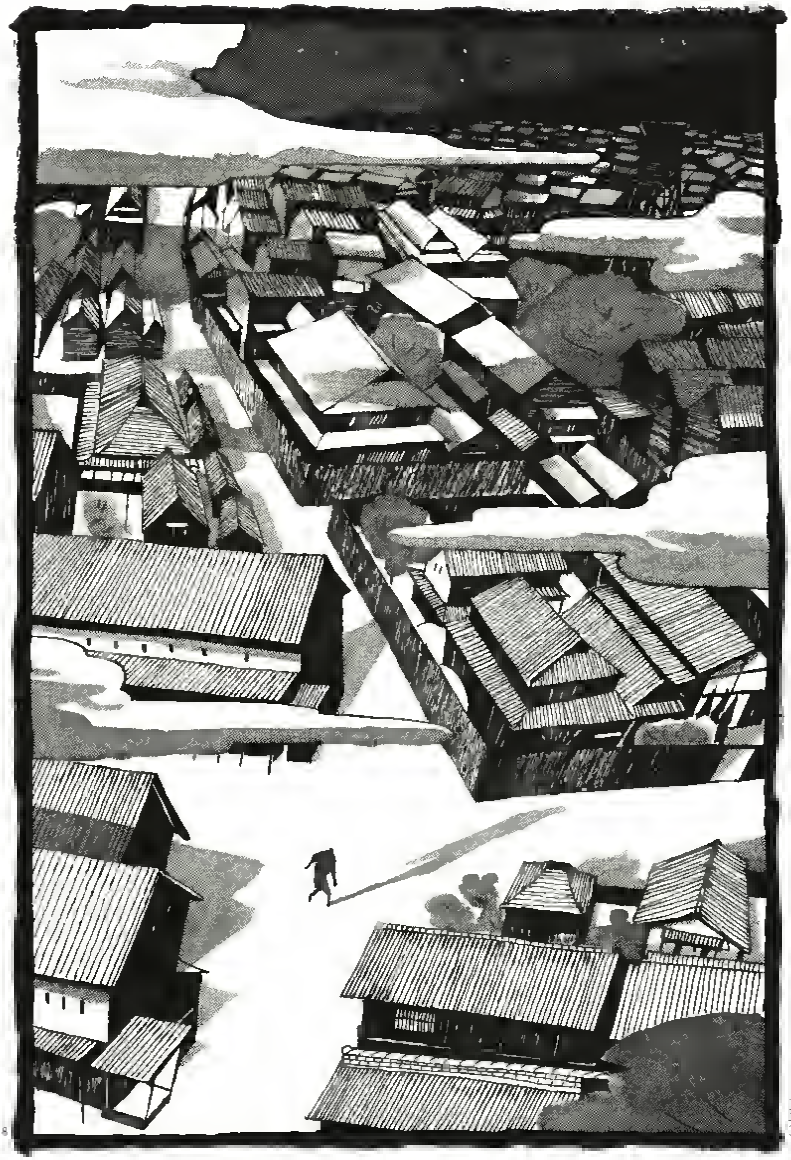
AGHH!

STAB

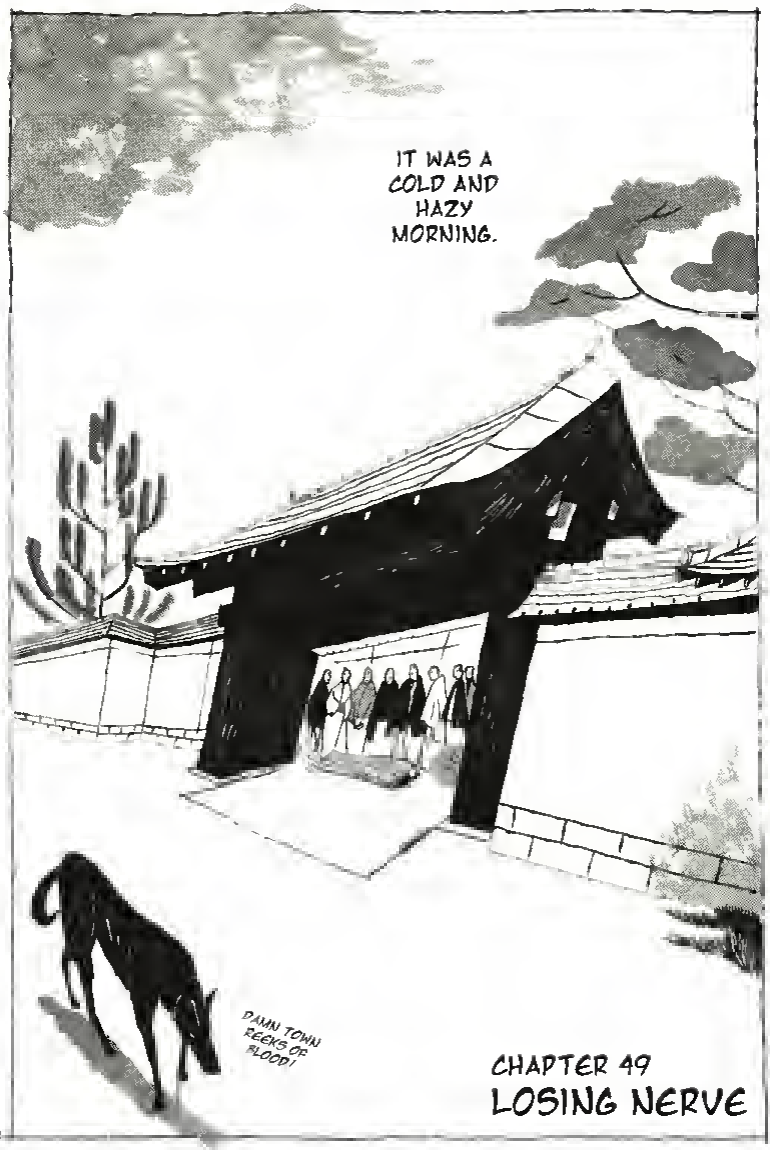

NGHH!
Y...
YOU'RE ...

HMPH
KIKUCHI!
YOU...!

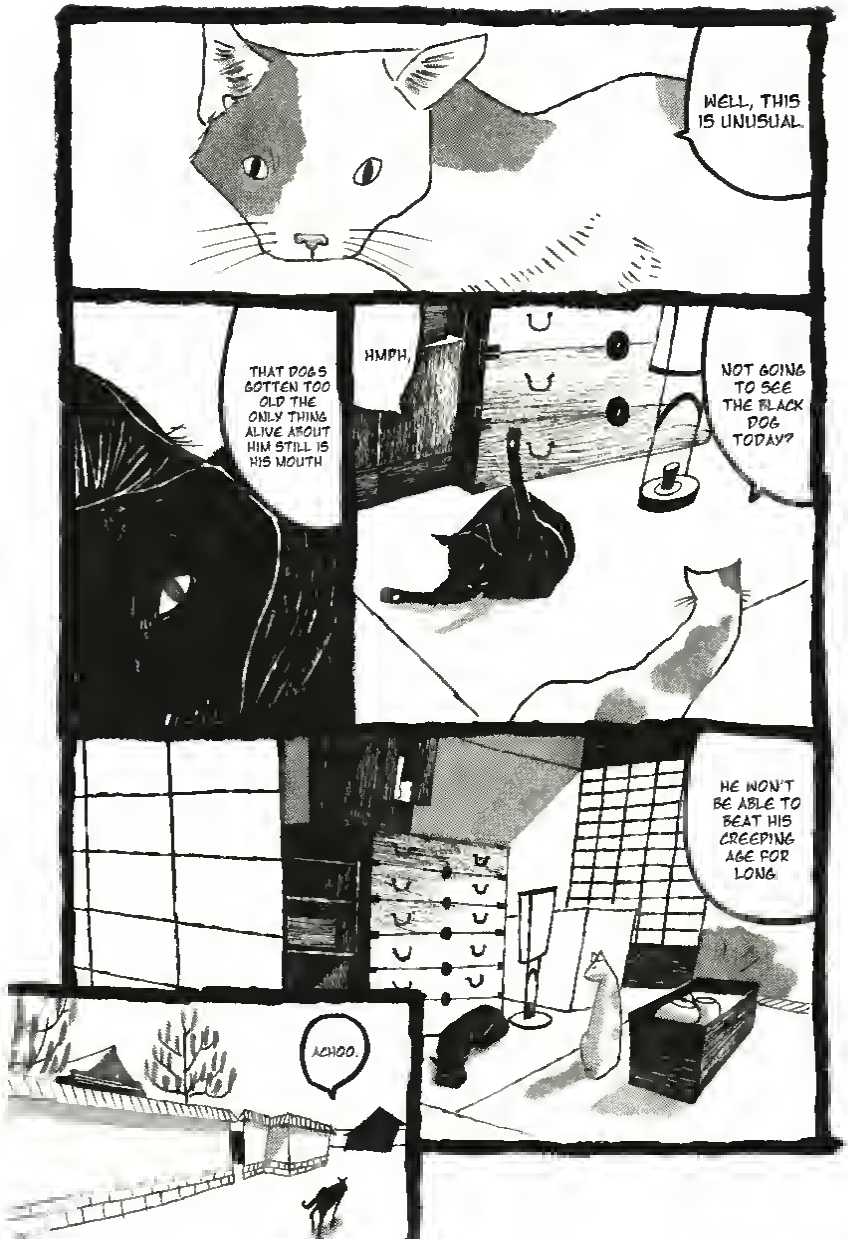
GAHH!



THE TWO CORPSES WERE DELIVERED TO THE TAKI HOUSE'S EDO ESTATES A LITTLE PAST 8 IN THE MORNING
THE POLICE INFERRED THAT THE MURDERER WAS A MAN HIGHLY SKILLED WITH THE SWORD
AND FROM THE FOOTPRINTS LEFT AT THE SCENE OF THE CRIME, THEY ESTIMATED HIS HEIGHT AT AROUND 6 SHAKU



CHAPTER 49
LOSING NERVE


WELL, THIS IS UNUSUAL.
NOT GOING TO SEE THE BLACK DOG TODAY?
HMPH.
THAT DOG'S GOTTEN TOO OLD THE ONLY THING ALIVE ABOUT HIM STILL IS HIS MOUTH
HE WON'T BE ABLE TO BEAT HIS CREEPING AGE FOR LONG.
ACHOO.

I KNOW I MAY BE DISRESPECTING THE DECEASED...
SHAVE
BUT IT WAS THEIR FAULT FOR BEING RECKLESS.
ACCORDING TO THE POLICE, THEY'D BEEN DRINKING ALL NIGHT.
AM I WRONG?
THEY LACK DISCIPLINE.
YAMAMOTO
HMM?
AH...

AH, WELL... UMM...
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
YAMA-MOTO!
I'M CON-CERNED WHETHER THIS CASE WAS HIS ACT OR NOT...
.....
KIKUCHI SHINNO-SUKE
HMM?
AH...
IT'S FINE, SANKICHI CAN BE TRUSTED
AHEM.

HE IS WORKING FOR OUR HOUSE, SO REST ASSURED
IS THAT SO?
YES, SIR.
ISN'T KIKUCHI CURRENTLY LOCKED UP AT THE KODEN-MACHOU JAIL?
BUT AREN'T YOUR SUSPICIONS CURIOUS?
THESE PAPERS HAVE RECENTLY BEEN SPREAD AROUND THE CITY
WELL, THERE IS A RUMOUR THAT SAYS HE BROKE OUT OF PRISON
HA!

HMPH,
HOW OVERLY DRAMATIC ...!
EVEN IF IT WERE TRUE. JUST WHY WOULD HE AIM FOR OUR MEN?
WASN'T IT HIS OWN FAULT FOR KILLING THAT OFFICER AND GETTING ARRESTED?
IT WAS OUR OWN MEN WHO REPORTED HIM TO THE MAGISTRATE.
...AND WHY DID YOU MEN DO THAT?
WE FIRMLY BELIEVED THAT HE WOULD EVENTUALLY BRING HARM TO OUR HOUSE IF WE REMAINED ASSOCIATED WITH HIM.

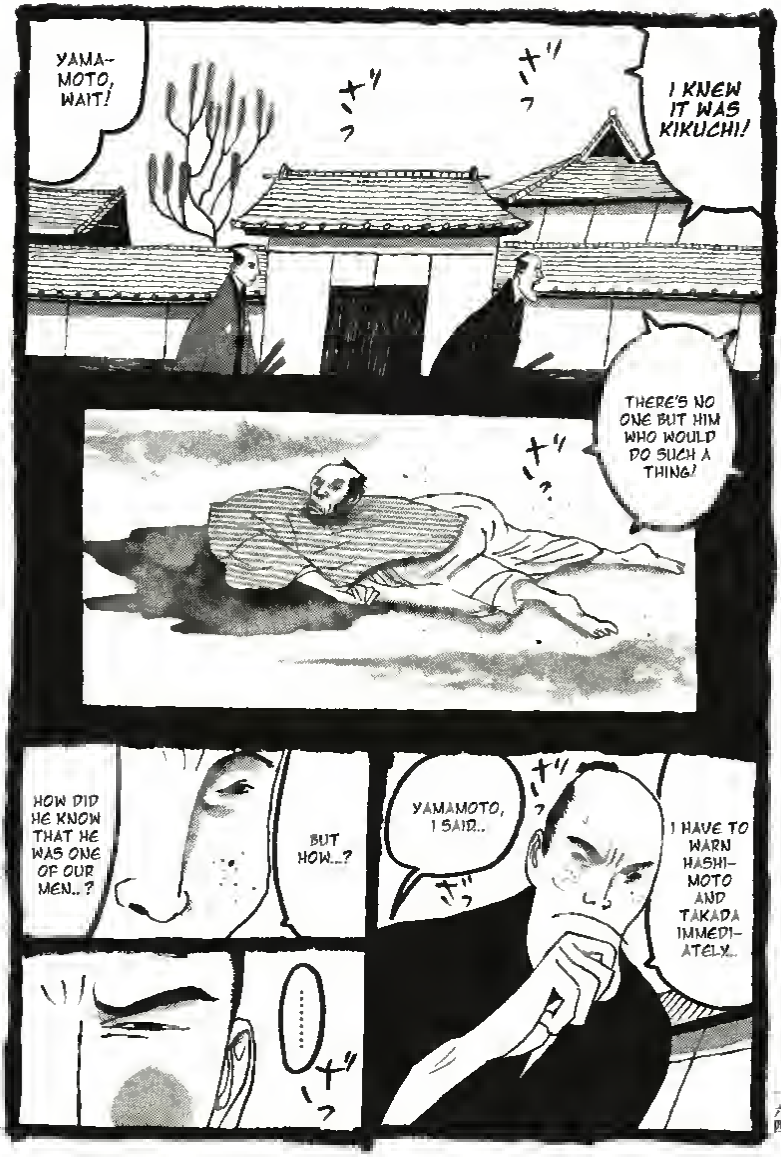
YAMAMOTO, DO YOU KNOW OF THE PHRASE, "TO SEE A SERPENT'S SHADOW IN A CUP?"*
HE IS MOST DEFINITELY A DEMON DISGUISED AS A HUMAN
HIS SWORD IS FULL OF MALICE AND EVIL
DO NOT BE SWAYED BY MERE RUMOURS

*A PHRASE THAT MEANS EVEN THE MOST RIDICULOUS CLAIMS CAN AFFECT ONE, IF ONE BELIEVES IN IT.

HAHAHA
HAHA
STEP
STEP
STEP
I'M FLYING!
STEP

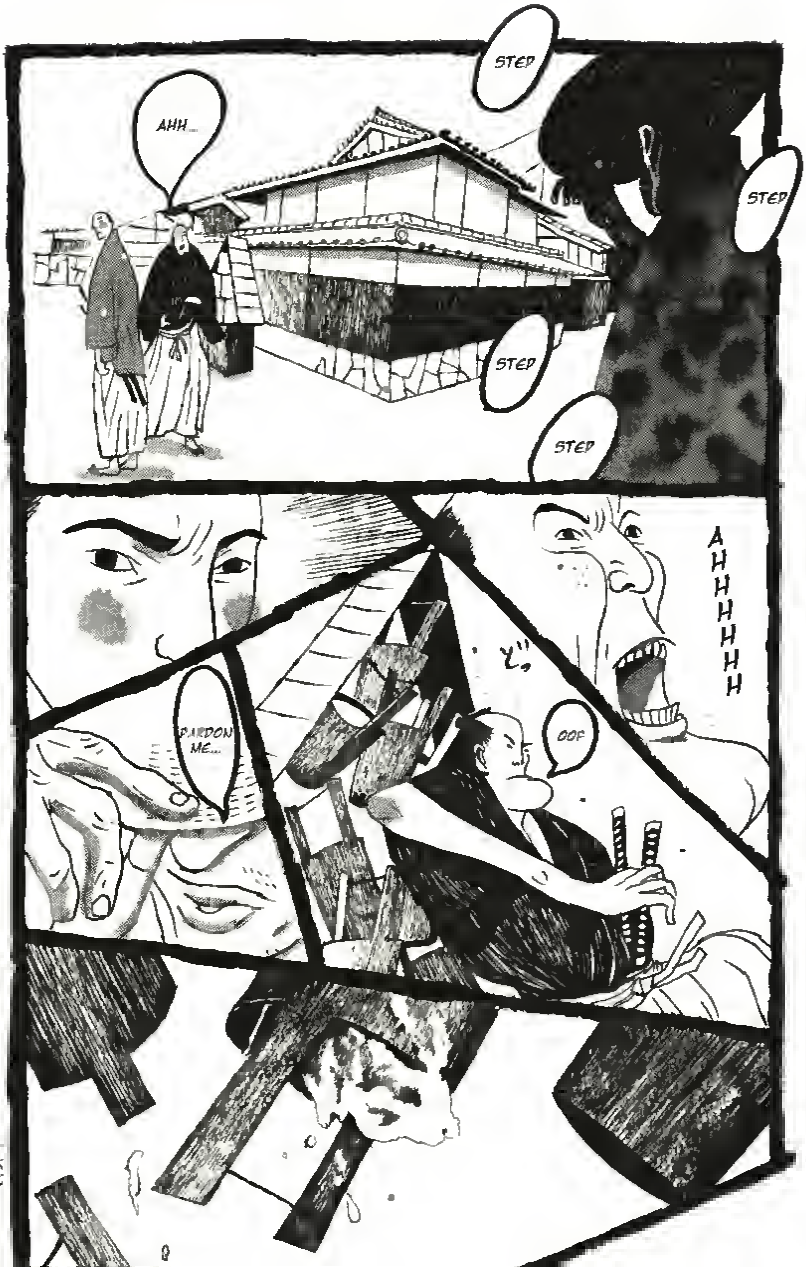
DAMN, I'M LATE AGAIN.
STEP
STEP
STEP
STEP!
DAMN IT...
MORI'S BOUND TO SCREAM AND LECTURE ME AGAIN...
STEP
STEP
HMM...?
AM I BEING TAILED?
STEP
STEP

DASH
NAH, CAN'T BE...


YAMA-
MOTO,
WAIT!
I KNEW
IT WAS
KIKUCHI!
THERE'S NO
ONE BUT HIM
WHO WOULD
DO SUCH A
THING!
I HAVE TO
WARN
HASHI-
MOTO
AND
TAKADA
IMMEDI-
ATELY..
YAMAMOTO,
I SAID..
BUT
HOW..?
HOW DID
HE KNOW
THAT HE
WAS ONE
OF OUR
MEN..?
.....

YAMA
MOTO
HAVE YOU FORGOT-TEN THAT YOU ARE A WARRIOR!?
WHY IS IT THAT YOU ARE LOSING YOUR NERVE FOR A SINGLE RONIN!?

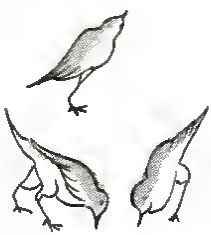
AND IF ANYTHING WERE TO HAPPEN TO YOU, I, MORI SAZA-TAROU, SHALL RISK MY LIFE TO PROTECT YOU!
SO DO NOT FEAR!
YES...
YES, SI!...
HMM?


AHH...
STEP
STEP
STEP
STEP
AHHHHHH
PARDON ME...
OOF

IS THAT SO?
AH...
HAHA...
ONLY WISHED TO ASK FOR SOME DIRECTIONS...
I, UHH...
AHAHA... HAHAHA...
HA HA HA
LOOKING AT HOW EASILY YAMAMOTO PANICKED.
MORI COULD ALREADY FAINTLY SEE THE ASSASSIN KIKUCHI'S SHADOW ENCIRCLING THEM.

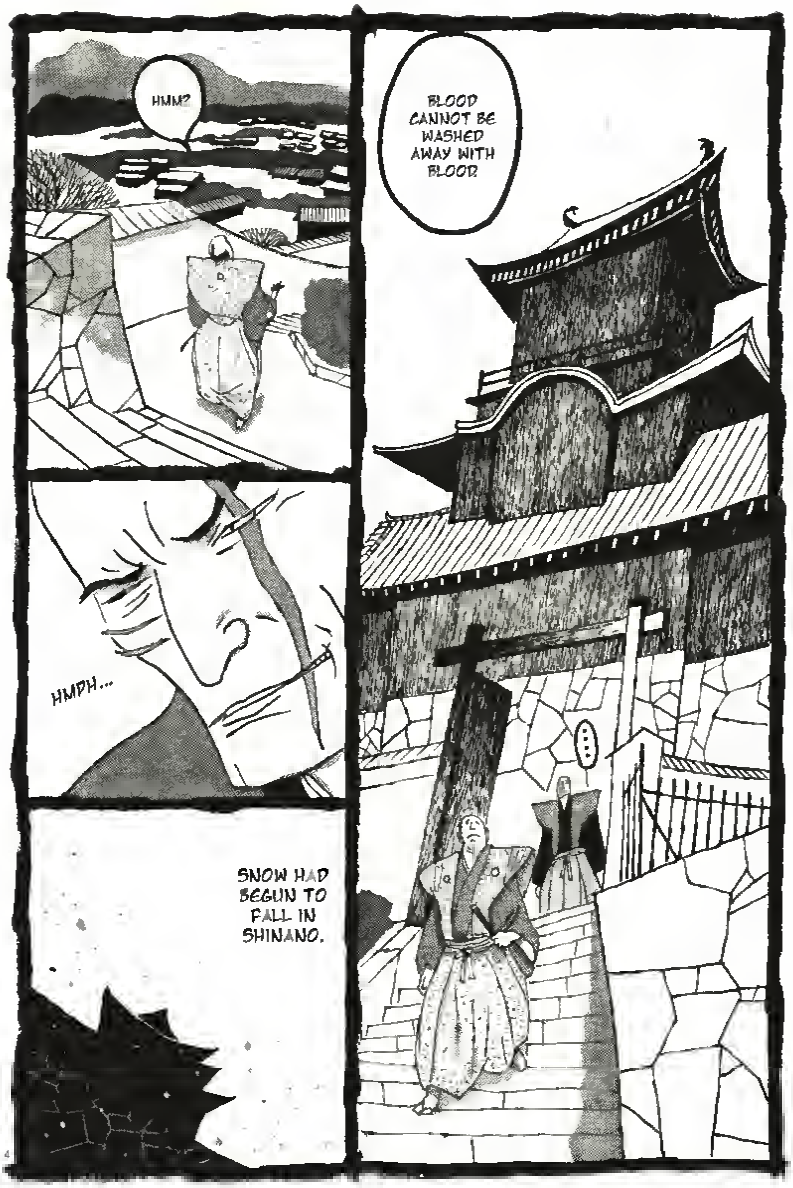
CHAPTER 50

THE HAPPENINGS OF SHINANO, THE EVERYDAY THINGS OF EDO



SHINANO
MORI'S LETTER FROM EDO HAD ARRIVED
SECOND-IN-LINE KAROU
OMURASAKI JUUZO
UGH.
THE CRIMINAL IS RUMOURED TO BE KIKUCHI SHINNOSUKE WHO BROKE OUT OF PRISON.
3 OF THE RETAINERS HERE AT EDO HAVE RECENTLY BEEN MURDERED

AND THAT WAS MORE OR LESS THE CONTENTS OF THE LETTER.
SINCERELY, MORI.
BUT REST ASSURED, FOR I VOW TO BRING HIS HEAD TO JUSTICE MYSELF.
TRYING TO SOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS WITH A SWORD. I SEE...
SNIVEL
THAT IDIOT...
HEAD KAROU
TAKEBE HYOUBUNOSUKE
THAT WILL ONLY EVENTUALLY CAUSE A SITUATION TO SPIRAL OUT OF ONE'S CONTROL IN THE END OMURASAKI.


HMM?
BLOOD CANNOT BE WASHED AWAY WITH BLOOD
HMPH...
SNOW HAD BEGUN TO FALL IN SHINANO.

EDO
AT THE KATAGI TENEMENTS, THE DEAD BODY OF A BLACK DOG WAS FOUND BESIDE A WELL.
IT'S COMPLETELY STIFF
LOOKING AT THE COLD STIFF CORPSE SOMEONE COMPARED IT TO A 2 MONTH OLD STALE RICECAKE
I'LL GIVE IT A PROPER BURIAL.
I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED
カリ
カリ
カリ

SENOU AND THE KIDS HEADED TO THE TEMPLE TO BURY THE DOG.
わあ
わあ
ガラ
ガラ
ガラ
PRIEST HOUGA KINDLY LET A CORNER OF THE GRAVE-YARD TO BE USED TO BURY THE DOG.
AND EVEN SAID SOME PRAYERS FOR ITS FUNERAL.
YOSHIFOU CRIED JUST A LITTLE.

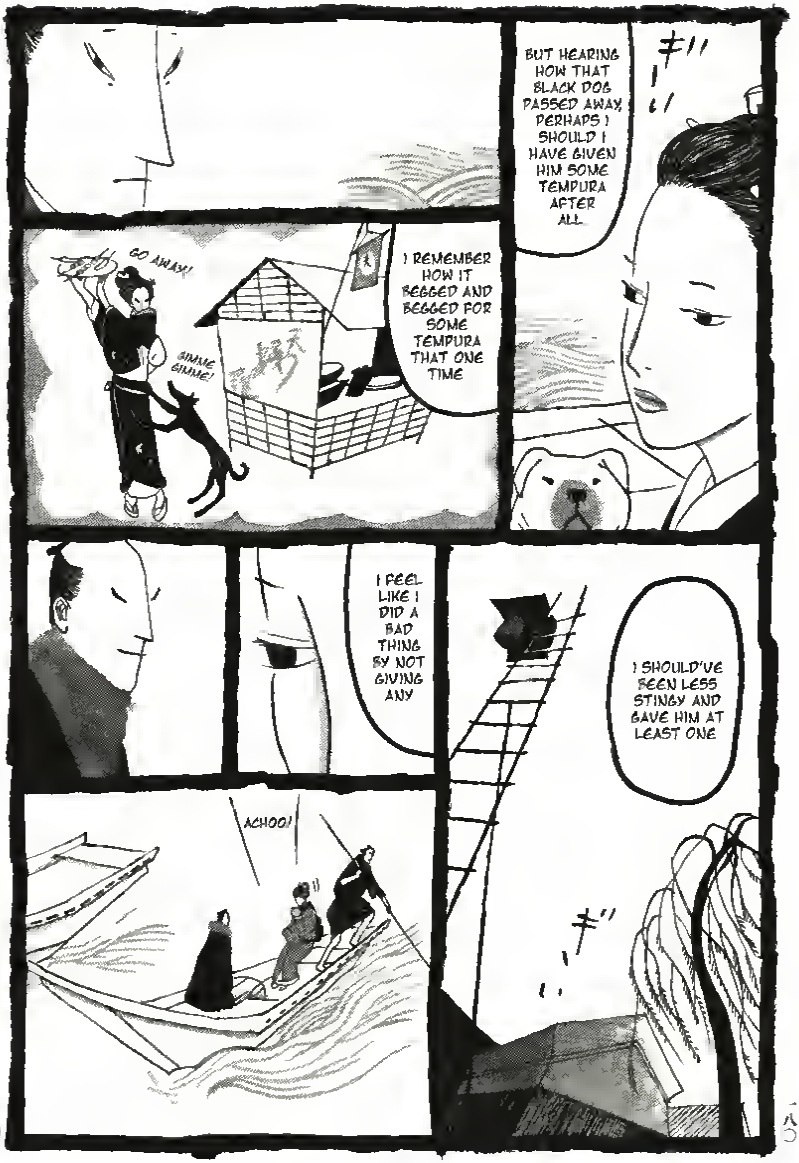
YIP
YIP
YIP
YIP
MY, AREN'T YOU A BRAVE LITTLE THING
WHERE'RE YOUR PARENTS? WERE YOU ABANDONED?
HMM
YIP YIP
SO TINY AND YET YOU'RE NOT SCARED AT ALL?
YIP YIP

...
I DON'T GIVE A RAT'S TAIL ABOUT MY PARENTS, NOW GIMME SOME FOOD!
...THAT'S WHAT THIS PUP HERE IS SAYING...

I SEE, SO THAT BLACK DOG DIED...
HE'S SUCH A NICE MAN, THAT PRIEST.
PRIEST HOUGA ALLOWED US TO BURY IT AT THE TEMPLE
YES, HE IS.

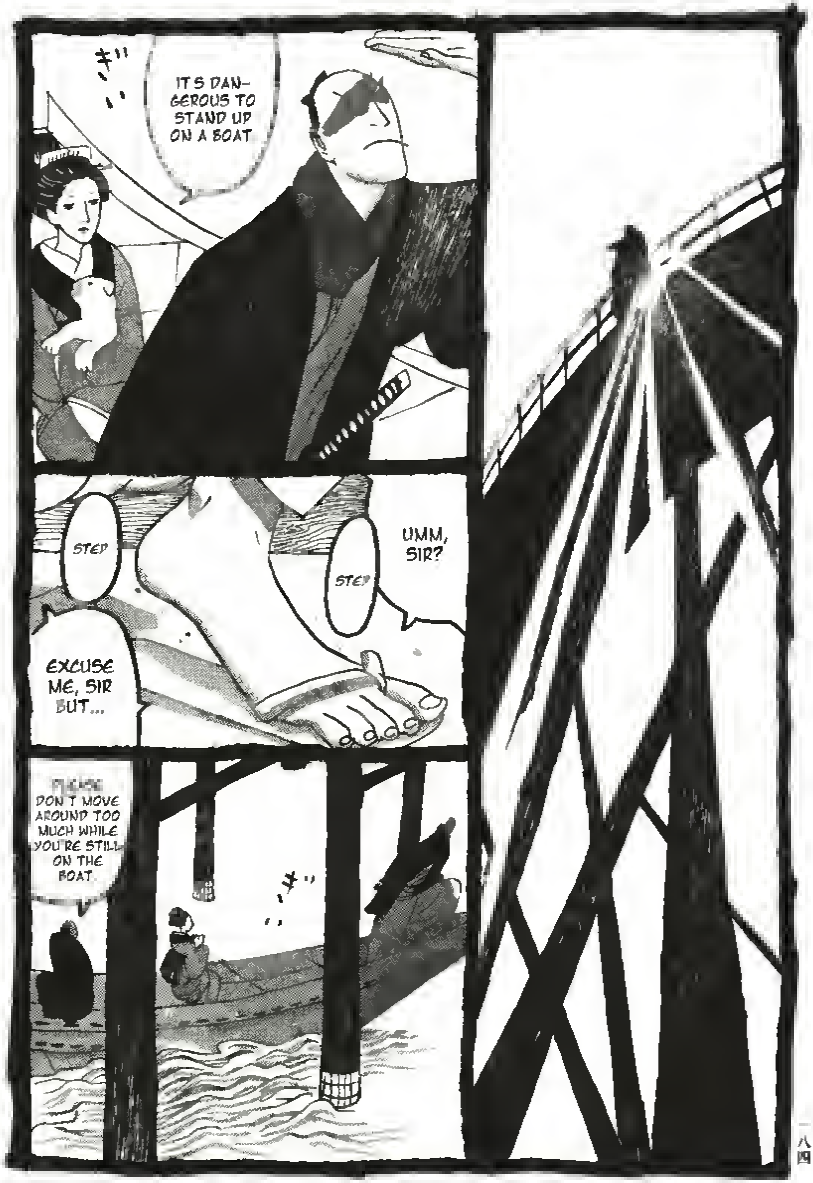
ARE YOU PLANNING TO KEEP HIM, RITSU?
THEN PERHAPS THIS PUP HERE IS THAT BLACK DOG'S REINCARNATION.
LET'S SEE... HE'S BRAVE AND BOLD, SO HOW ABOUT "RIKI"*?
I'LL HAVE TO THINK UP A NAME FOR HIM THEN
PERHAPS HE MIGHT SCARE THEM OFF WHEN HE GROWS UP...
HMM. I GET SOME FOUL-TEMPERED CUSTOMERS EVERY NOW AND THEN...

*RIKI CAN MEAN "POWER/STRENGTH"


BUT HEARING HOW THAT BLACK DOG PASSED AWAY, PERHAPS I SHOULD I HAVE GIVEN HIM SOME TEMPURA AFTER ALL
I REMEMBER HOW IT BEGGED AND BEGGED FOR SOME TEMPURA THAT ONE TIME
GO AWAY!
GIMME GIMME!
I FEEL LIKE I DID A BAD THING BY NOT GIVING ANY
I SHOULD'VE BEEN LESS STINGY AND GAVE HIM AT LEAST ONE
ACHOO!

YES
IT'S QUITE COLD ALONG THE RIVER THESE DAYS, ISN'T IT?
BUT EVEN SO,
RIDING ON A BOAT WITH YOU MAKES IT ALL THE WORTHWHILE.
HA HA HA

ギリ…
ギリ
WHAT'S WRONG, SOU?


IT'S DANGEROUS TO STAND UP ON A BOAT.
UMM, SIR?
STEP
STEP
EXCUSE ME, SIR BUT...
DON'T MOVE AROUND TOO MUCH WHILE YOU'RE STILL ON THE BOAT.

ええっ…
ざわ
ざわ

THE BLACK DOG, TO THE UNDER-WOLD...
SNOW, TO THE LANDS OF SHINANO...
AND THE ASSASSIN, TO THE SAHA WORLD*...
HA...
TO BE CONTINUED
PLEASE SIT BACK DOWN SIR.

*BUDDHIST TERM THAT REFERS TO OUR PRESENT WORLD, FULL OF BOTH GOOD AND EVIL.

TRANSLATED BY HOX

第六集へつづく……

待つべし、待つべし。

BIG SPIRITS COMICS SPECIAL

竹光侍 五

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